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Valentin RUNOV

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By the beginning of 1945, despite all the defeats on the Eastern Front, neither the leadership of the Sh Reich nor the command of the Wehrmacht considered the war lost - the German army and SS troops were ready to fight for the Vaterland blood) and, having shortened the front and entrenched themselves on convenient defensive lines, they seriously hoped to transfer the war to a positional phase - following the example of the First World War. However, the Red Army frustrated all these plans. On January 12, 1945, Soviet troops launched a decisive offensive, crushed the enemy defenses, defeated Army Group A, and in just three weeks advanced 500 kilometers to the west, surpassing the Wehrmacht of the 1941 model in terms of the pace of the offensive. It was a "blitzkrieg in reverse", retribution for the catastrophe on-

the initial period of the war - with the difference that, unlike the Wehrmacht, the Red Army struck at the enemy who was fully combat ready and waiting for an attack. The Vistula-Oder operation is rightfully considered a model of offensive operations. This book pays tribute to one of the greatest, most brilliant and "pure" victories not only in national but also in world history.

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Instead of a preface

The Kremlin chimes struck 7 pm, when Alexander Nikolaevich Poskrebyshev, knocking as always, entered Stalin's office. Iosif Vissa Rionovich was sitting in front of the portraits of A.V. Suvorov and M.I. Kutuzov at the end of a long conference table, studying some document. When he was done with it, he got up and took the document away, placing it on his desk.

"I hear you, comrade Poskrebyshev. Something urgent?

Yes, Comrade Stalin. Another personal message from Winston Churchill.

Poskrebyshev gave Stalin a translation of the message, froze, waiting for instructions.

Iosif Vissarionovich went deep into reading.

"Personal and strictly secret message from Mr.
Churchill to Marshal Stalin

There is very heavy fighting going on in the west, and at any time big decisions may be required from the High Command. You yourselves know from your own experience how troubling the situation is when one has to defend a very wide front after a temporary loss of initiative. It is highly desirable and necessary for General Eisenhower to know in general terms what you intend to do, since this, of course, will affect all of his and our most important

our solutions. According to the message received, our emissary Air Chief Marshal Tedder was in Cairo last night, weather-bound. His trip was greatly delayed through no fault of yours. If he has not yet arrived at your place, I shall be grateful if you can let me know whether we can count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front or somewhere else during January and at any other points you mention. you might want to mention. I will not pass on this highly classified information to anyone, with the exception of Field Marshal Brooke and General Eisenhower, and only if it is kept in the strictest confidence. I consider the matter urgent.

January 6, 1945".

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Stalin (Dzhugashvili) Iosif Vissarionovich (1879-1953) - during the Great Patriotic War, Chairman of the State Defense Committee (GKO), Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK), Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the USSR, Chairman of the Supreme High Command (VGK), People's Commissar of Defense, Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Molotov (Scriabin) Vyacheslav Mikhailovich (1890-1986). During the Great Patriotic War - Deputy Chairman of the State Defense Committee, 1st Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

Poskrebyshev Alexander Nikolaevich (1892-1966) - during the Great Patriotic War, head of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks.

Vasilevsky Alexander Mikhailovich (1895-1977) - during the Great Patriotic War, head of the Operations Directorate of the General Staff, from June 1942 chief of the General Staff, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, member of the Stavka. As it became known later, the initiator of this message was the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Western Europe, General of the Army (four-star general) Dwight David Eisenhower, who on December 21, 1944 turned to US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt with a request to find out

when you can count on a new Russian offensive.

"This is of the utmost importance to me," he wrote, "on which I will build my own plans for the Supreme High Command." From February 1945 he was commander of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian Front. Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Churchill Winston Leonard Spencer (1874-1965). During the Second World War, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Finance, the head of the military cabinet.

- Invite comrades Molotov and Vasya to me
levskoy.

— Listen, Comrade Stalin.

After 10-15 minutes, V.M. entered his office. Molo tov, then A.M. Vasilevsky.

"Here, read it, the British, I think, not without the consent of the Americans, are asking for help," Iosif Vissarionovich turned to Molotov, passing him the text of the message. "And I will ask you, Comrade Vasilevsky, to report on the latest data on the situation in the Ardennes.

The Chief of the General Staff approached the map of the Western European theater of military operations with the situation marked on it. Taking a pointer, began the report;

- On December 31, the German command launched an offensive against the 3rd American Army, but they could not reach Bastogne. The fighting unfolded in a 100-kilometer strip from Externelal to Saint-Hubert. On January 3, the 7th American Corps launched a counterattack, but did not achieve its goal. But the American troops were dealt an air strike involving up to 1000 aircraft. The attack force Model (two SS Panzer Divisions and a Grenadier Brigade) went over to the offensive, advancing 5-7 km by the end of December 5.

"According to Eisenhower's headquarters," Vasilevsky continued, "Rundstedt has at least four divisions. There are three infantry and one tank divisions in the reserve of the Anglo-American command in the order sector. According to intelligence data, Rundstedt is preparing for

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bear blows in the Ardennes and then in Alsace. The dates are preliminarily January 15-16.

- How is the preparation for the offensive going at Zhukov, Konev and Rokossovsky? Stalin asked Vasilevsky.

- According to the plan, the readiness of the fronts was determined by you, Comrade Stalin, on January 15-20. According to the reports of the commanders of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, the main preparatory measures have been completed. Things are somewhat worse on the 2nd Belorussian Front.

- Fine. What will be the proposals? - Stalin turned to Molotov, and then to Vasilevsky.

"I think we need to help the allies," Vyacheslav Mikhailovich replied. Vasilevsky nodded his head in agreement, wanted to say something, but Stalin had already turned to Molotov again, inviting him to sit down at a long table, where members of the GKO, Stavka, and Politburo were usually seated.

— Write.

Stalin began to dictate responses to Churchill's message, occasionally approaching Molotov, correcting the text. He spoke slowly, apparently considering the wording. Read it again, saying:

— I think that Mr. Churchill has been given an answer to all the questions he has posed.

"Personally and strictly confidential

from Prime Minister I.V. Stalin

Prime Minister Mr W. Churchill

Received on the evening of January 7 your message of January 6, 1945.

Unfortunately, Air Chief Marshal Tedder has not yet arrived in Moscow.

Our superiority against the Germans in artillery and aviation is very important. In these types, clear weather is required for aviation and the absence of low fogs that prevent artillery from conducting aimed fire. We

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We are preparing for the offensive, but the weather is not favorable for our offensive. However, taking into account the situation of our allies on the Western Front, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided to complete the preparations at an accelerated pace and, regardless of the weather, open wide offensive operations against the Germans along the entire Central Front no later than the second half of January. You may rest assured that we will do everything possible to render assistance to our glorious allied forces.

January 7, 1945".

Turning to Poskrebyshev, who quietly entered the office, he handed him the text of the message.

Send for encryption. Tomorrow at 1 pm I should have a meeting with members of the State Defense Committee and the Politburo.

On the morning of January 9, I.V. Stalin received a reply message from W. Churchill.

"Personally and strictly secret message from Mr. Churchill to Marshal Stalin

1. I am very grateful to you for your exciting message. I forwarded it to General Eisenhower for his personal information only. May your noble undertaking be full of good luck!

2. The battle in the West is not going so badly. It is quite possible that the Huns will be driven out of their salient with very heavy losses. This is a battle primarily fought by the Americans; and their troops fought admirably, suffering heavy losses in the process.

We and the Americans are throwing everything we can into the fight. The news you have given me will greatly encourage General Eisenhower, as it will give him confidence that the Germans will have to divide their reserves between our

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mi two flaming fronts. There will be no interruption in the battle in the West, according to the statements of the generals leading it.

January 9, 1945".

On the same day, the commanders of the troops of the 1st White Russian and 1st Ukrainian fronts received an order from the Supreme Command Headquarters to postpone the start of the offensive.

On January 12, the Vistula-Oder operation began.

The news of the new offensive of the Red Army and the mass transfer of German troops to the east that had begun immediately brought the allies out of a state of uncertainty and pessimism. Commander of the 3rd American Army, General George Paton, several

days ago, having doubted that the outcome of the war would be favorable for the Western allies, he radically changed his views. On the evening of January 13, he already wrote to his homeland that "the morale of the soldiers at the present time is significantly different from the previous one," that they "now feel like winners." Eisenhower telegraphed the Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces: "The important news that the valiant Red Army has moved forward with a new powerful breakthrough was received with enthusiasm by the allied armies in the West. I express my congratulations and best wishes to you and to everyone who leads this offensive and participates in it. In a report to Washington to General Marshall on January 14, 1945, he noted that "the news of the Red Army going on the offensive was met with enthusiasm among the troops." Moreover, during a meeting with Marshal G.K. Zhukov (it took place shortly after the end of the war), he emphasized: "Everyone felt better at heart, especially when we received a message that the offensive of the Soviet troops was developing with great success. We were sure that the Germans would no longer be able to strengthen their western front.

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"The feats performed by your heroic soldiers earlier, and the effectiveness that they have already demonstrated in this offensive, give every reason to hope for the speedy success of our troops on both fronts," F. Roosevelt wrote to I.V. Stalin on January 18, 1945. Indeed, the command of the troops of the Western Allies had a real opportunity to crush the German fascist groupings in the Ardennes and Alsace. Summing up the results of the offensive operations of the Red Army in January 1945, the headquarters of the 21st Army Group made a short but significant conclusion that "the German tank fist brought over the American troops was withdrawn to the Russian

skim".

So, by January 18, the crisis in the Ardennes was over. Real prospects for an offensive on the entire front opened up before the Allies. "The situation caused by the threat from the Russians," emphasized the English historian and theorist B. Liddell Hart, "forced the Germans to decide to sacrifice the defense of the Rhine for the defense of the Oder in order to delay the Red Army. Thus, the offensive of the Anglo-American troops was facilitated. It is interesting to note that years later, US President G. Truman, assessing the actions of the American command in the Ardennes, noted that D. Eisenhower "survived solely thanks to the help of the Soviet troops, for which he almost begged

on the knees".

Another assessment of the situation of that time is now from the side of the enemy. The German military historian General Tippleskirch, commander of the defeated 4th Army in the summer of 1944, testifies: "The blow (January 12. - Auth.) Was so strong that it overturned not only the divisions of the first echelon, but also rather large mobile reserves, pulled up by Hitler's categorical order, very close to the front. The latter suffered losses already from artillery preparation

eleven

Russians, and later, as a result of a general retreat, they could not be used at all according to the plan. Deep penetrations into the German front were so numerous that it was impossible to liquidate them or at least limit them. The front of the 4th Panzer Army was torn apart, and there was no longer any possibility of holding back the advance of the Russian troops. The latter immediately introduced their tank formations into the breaches, which began to advance with the main forces towards the Nida River, at the same time undertaking an enveloping maneuver on Kielce with the northern wing.

The testimony of the Nazi command in the person of the commander of the 5th Panzer Army, General Hasso von Manteuffel, is also quite remarkable: "On January 12-13, the Russians launched their big offensive from the Barunovsky (Sandomierovsky. - Auth.) bridgehead. His influence immediately affected the Western Front. We have long been anxiously awaiting the transfer of our troops to the east, and now it was carried out with the utmost speed. The 6th SS Panzer Army was transferred there with separate units of army subordination, two corps headquarters and four SS Panzer divisions, the Fuhrerbegleit brigade and the grenadier brigade, as well as all their artillery and crossing facilities. It is not difficult to imagine how the withdrawal from the front of such a mass of manpower and equipment affected the constant, catastrophic shortage of fuel in our country.

January 12, 1945 - the first day of the largest strategic Vistula-Oder offensive operation, carried out in a strip of more than 500 km (Table 1) by the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts with the assistance of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian and right kry la of the 4th Ukrainian fronts with the aim of defeating the German army group "A" (since January 26, the army group "Center") and completing the liberation of Poland. It included the Sandomierz-Silesian (troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front) and Warsaw-Poznan (troops of the 1st White Russian Front) offensive operations. Complete

The Vistula-Oder operation on February 3 was the destruction of 35 divisions of the Wehrmacht, 25 enemy divisions lost, according to captured documents, from 50 to 70 percent of their personnel. About 147,400 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner, 14,000 guns and mortars, 1,400 tanks and assault guns were captured. The depth of the advance of the Soviet troops exceeded 500 km.

The operation is characterized by high average daily rates of advance: rifle formations 20-35 km, tank and mechanized troops 30-38 km. The 2nd Guards Tank Army on certain days advanced 95-100 km in fighting. As follows from the data in Table. 1, such high rates were achieved for the first time during the Great Patriotic War. It must also be emphasized that this was one of the offensive operations in which success was ensured by relatively little bloodshed. The losses of the Soviet troops were: irretrievable 43,251 people, sanitary - about 150 thousand soldiers and officers, that is, 2-6 times lower than in the Dnieper-Carpathian, Nizhnedneprovsk, Chernigov-Poltava, Smolensk, Oryol, Belorussian, Budapest, East Prussian, Berlin and a number of other operations. Average daily casualties (irretrievable and sanitary) in the Vistula-Oder operation amounted to 8397 people. For comparison, in the Berlin operation they amounted to 15,325, in Belgrade-Kharkov - 12,170, Chernigov-Poltava - 11,887, Oryol - 11,313, Belorussian - 11,262, Dnieper-Carpathian - 95,654.

The Vistula-Oder operation had a huge impact on the situation on the Western Front. "When Hitler, in his Eagle's Nest, received the news of the beginning of the offensive of the Soviet troops," noted the Chief of Staff of the Western Front, General Sigerried Wesphal, "he returned to Berlin with great haste. The events of the following months were destined to bring the war to an end.

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Table No. 1

THE DEPTH OF ADVANCE, THE RATES OF THE OFFENSIVE AND THE IRREVOCABLE LOSSES OF THE SOVIET TROOPS IN THE STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS OF 1943-1945

(Average daily 5
advance rates ÷ 5 Strategic
Depth (km/day) ÷ ÷ 5 offensive advances No.

troops = North-
300-400 9-10 15-17 69 627 Caucasian

Operation on breaking the blockade of
Leningrad 45 3-3n5
4-5 33,940
Voronezhsko- 360-400 6-7 7-10 55,475
Kharkovskaya
'Smolenskaya 200-250 4-5 6-10 107 645
Donbasskaya 250-300 7-8 10-15 66 166
Chernigovsko-
250-300 6-7 7-8 102 957 Poltava Novorossiysko-
150 14564 Tamanskaya

Nizhnedneprovskaya 100—300 173 201

Kyiv 190 6491
Dnipro-250-400 270 198 Carpathian
Leningrad-220—
280 76 686 Novgorod Crimean 200—260
17 754
Vyborgov-110-250 23 624
Petrozavodskaya Belorusskaya 550
178 507 at the first
stage 220 12-15 20—25 at the
second stage. 330 10-12 13-14

Strategic offensive
operations

Advance
depth
zheniya

Average daily
advance rates (km/day)

Armored and
mechanized
troops

Rifle Troops

Irrecoverable losses
of the Soviet

Lvivsko- 350

(Sandomierz

Yassko- 300—320

Chisinau

Eastern 50-110

Carpathian

Baltic 300

Belgradskaya 200 6-7 8-9 43 500

Kirkenesskaya 150 5-6 6-7 6084

Budapestskaya 250-400 2-3 4-5 80026 Vistula-

Oderskaya 500-520 00-35 30-38 43 251 —5 4—6 16 337

Karpatskaya

Eastern 150-200 9-10 22-30 126 464 Prussian

Eastern 130-150 2-3 4-5 52 740 Pomeranian

Vienna 150-250 5-6 7-8 38 661 | Berlinskaya

100-220 5-6 5-10 78 291 Pragueskaya 160-200

19-22 30-32 11265

Chapter 1

WESTERN FRONT.

AT HITLER'S HQ "EAGLE'S NEST"

On December 11, 1944, at Hitler's headquarters "Adlershorst" ("Eagle's Nest"), located near the city of Nauheim in the castle, around which a group of bunkers was built, adapted to the surrounding mountainous rocky terrain (the Fuhrer's bunker was equipped in natural rock), reigned revival. As the head of Hitler's bodyguard, Lieutenant General of the Police Hans Raptener, recalled, on the eve of the SS service, the SS guards from the Leib Adolf Hitler and the Fuhrer's escort battalion from the Grossdeutschland division were instructed. All night the forests near the location were combed, the entrances to the castle were checked. Since dawn, the passes of the staff of the headquarters were re-registered, the list of officials arriving at the "Eagle's Nest" was updated. All these and other events were carried out in connection with the fact that a conference was being prepared between the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht and the senior command staff,

involved in the operation in the Ardennes under the code name "Watch on the Rhine".

GEOGRAPHICAL INFO

Ardennes - the western continuation of the Reich

Slate mountains in Belgium,

France and Luxembourg. Height up to 694 meters. Birch, oak and spruce forests.

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The meeting began promptly at noon.

The former commander of the 5th Panzer Army, General H. Manteuffel, recalls:

"The entire commanding staff participating in the upcoming operation "Watch on the Rhine", including division commanders, was summoned by Hitler to his residence "Eagle's Nest". The commanders of two tank corps and I arrived on time. Here we met Field Marshals G. Rundstedt (commander of the Western Front) and V. Model (commander of Army Group B). Colonel General Sepp Dietrich (commander of the 6th SS Panzer Army) was already at Hitler's headquarters.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Hitler (Schicklgruber) Adolf (1889-1945), leader (Führer) of the Nazi Party (since 1920). From January 30, 1933 - Reich Chancellor of the German Party, from August 1, 1934 President and Reich Chancellor, from 1938 Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (Wehrmacht), from December 1941 and Commander-in-Chief of the German Land Forces. April 30, 1945 committed suicide.

Bormann Martin (1900–1945?), member of the Fascist Party from 1925, member of the senior leadership staff. Since May 1941 he was the chief of the party office, a member of the Council of Ministers of Imperial Defense. Since April 1943, Hitler's personal secretary, his main confidant. In May 1945 he disappeared. There is no reliable information about his fate.

Alfred (1890-1946), colonel general (since 1944). Member of the First World War. Graduated from the military academy. From August 1939 he was chief of staff of the operational leadership of the Wehrmacht's High Command, one of Hitler's main advisers on operational and strategic issues.

Keitel Wilhelm (1882-1949), Field Marshal General (1940). Member of the First World War. In 1938-1945 he was Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht Supreme High Command. May 8, 1945 signed the act of surrender of the armed forces of Germany.

Model Walter (1891-1945), Field Marshal General (1944). Member of the First World War. From June 1941 on the Soviet-German front: commander of the 3rd Panzer Division, 41st Panzer Corps, commander of the 9th Army, Army Group "North", "South", "Center". August-September 1944

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commanded troops in the West, from September 1944 - Army Group B, after the defeat of which in April 1945 he shot himself.

Rundstedt Karl Rudolf Gerd von (1875-1953), General Field Marshal (1940). He graduated from the military academy in 1907. Member of the First World War. Since 1939 he was commander of Army Group South, in 1940 - Army Group A, in June-November 1941 - Army Group South. Since March 1942 he was the commander-in-chief of the German troops in the West. Retired since March 1945. Until 1949 he was in British captivity.

In addition to army generals, SS generals and commanders of SS Panzer divisions were called. There were not enough chairs, and the SS generals obligingly gave way to their senior army colleagues, while they themselves remained standing. At that time, some army generals got the impression that an SS officer was assigned to each of them. Of course, this was a delusion.

The composition of those present was very varied. On one side of the hall sat the generals—experienced soldiers, many of whom had glorified their names in past battles, all excellent specialists, men respected by their troops. Opposite them was the supreme commander of the armed forces, a round-shouldered figure with a pale, puffy face, hunched in an armchair. Hitler's hands trembled, and his left hand twitched convulsively every now and then, which he did his best to hide. He was a sick man, clearly overwhelmed by the burden of his responsibility. His physical condition has deteriorated markedly since our last meeting in Berlin, which took place only nine days ago. When Hitler walked, he visibly dragged one leg.

Sitting next to him was Jodl (Chief of Staff of the Operational Command of the Supreme High Command), already

an old man overworked by overwork. Previously, he had a strained expression on his face, a prim posture. Now, spiritually and physically exhausted, he looked different. When he talked to the officers, collecting

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moving in small groups, an impatient and irritable note slipped through his voice. Judging by the appearance of Keitel (Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht High Command), he was not as hard as Jodl in developing plans and preparing for a "decisive" operation in many ways.

Hitler began his speech, which lasted an hour and a half, in a low, unsteady voice. Gradually he began to speak more confidently, and this partly mitigated the first impression that his appearance made on those who had not met him in recent months and did not know him well. And yet it seemed that we were listening to a seriously ill person suffering from a complete breakdown of the nervous system.

He didn't say anything new to me - I've heard it all before. Hitler's speech caused disappointment in most of the generals present, including myself, for the reason that he had absolutely nothing to say on the issue that interested us primarily at this stage in the preparation of the counteroffensive, namely: to overcome the shortcomings that are so strongly felt even now when there are a few days left before the start of the operation. Contrary to my expectations, neither Hitler in his speech, nor Jodl in his report made later, even tried to dispel our fears in connection with the upcoming offensive. Hitler himself once said that the precondition for a "successful operation" was "the formation of fresh, fully combat-ready formations for the purposes of the offensive." This condition was met only partially, despite all the attempts of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Front to increase the number of troops. Although Rundstedt managed to strengthen his troops to a certain extent, he still could not create a strike force of the composition that was necessary for operations in the direction of the main attack.

... On the night of December 16, 1944, nothing seemed to foreshadow the threat hanging over the American troops in the Ardennes. But the silence was deceiving. Pro

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Tivnik has already completed the last preparations for a breakthrough to the west. Just before the counter-offensive, when the need to observe disguise disappeared, the German

the troops were read the order of Field Marshal G. Rundstedt. "Soldiers of the Western Front," it said, "your great hour has struck! Mighty shock armies are marching against the Anglo-Americans today. I have nothing more to add. You all feel: everything is at stake! Do your duty, give all your strength and do the superhuman in the name of our fatherland and our Fuhrer! Model drew up an order for Army Group B in the form of a response to Rundstedt's call: "We will not let down the Fuhrer and the Fatherland, who forged the punishing sword. Forward in the spirit of Leuthen. Our motto, as before, is the words: there are no better soldiers in the world than the soldiers of the Eiffel and Aachen.

The headquarters of the German armies, corps and formations once again specified the immediate tasks, the achievement of which was to ensure the rapid suppression of the defenses of the opposing American troops and open the way to the Meuse.

What was the political goal of Operation Watch on the Rhine?

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

The Ardennes operation (code name "Watch on the Rhine") was carried out by the Wehrmacht from December 16, 1944 to January 28, 1945 with the aim of defeating the American and British troops, changing the situation on the Western Front and freeing up forces for the Eastern Front. According to the plan of the German command, it was planned to break the fronts of the Allied troops in the Montau, Echternach sector (80 km), to force the river. Meuse, cut off and defeat in Belgium and Holland the Canadian 1st Army, the British 2nd Army, the 9th and 1st American armies.

The operation involved the 6th SS Panzer Army, the 5th Panzer Army and the 7th Army of Army Group B (commanded by General Field Marshal V. Model), which included about 250 thousand people, about 1000 tanks and assault guns, about 800 aircraft, 2617 guns and mortars. For operations in the rear of the allied forces, a separate 150th tank brigade was formed under the command of O. Skorzeny. At the front 115 km im

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opposed by 4 divisions (83 thousand people, 242 tanks, 182 self-propelled anti-tank and 394 artillery guns) of the 8th Corps of the 12th Army Group of the Americans (commander General O. Bradley).

Having achieved surprise, the German troops by December 25 advanced to a depth of 90 km. The American-British command, having regrouped, the next day launched a counterattack and stopped the advance of the Germans, who on the night of January 1 went on the offensive in the Strasbourg area. Position

allies remained heavy. With the Soviet troops going on the offensive, the German command was forced to regroup the 6th SS Panzer Army and a number of other units from the Ardennes to the Soviet-German front. This sharply weakened the grouping of the Germans and contributed to the further success of the Allied forces.

In an effort to avoid capitulation at all costs, the leaders of the Third Reich pinned great hopes on the aggravation of contradictions between the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition and on its split. "I believe," said the Minister of the Interior, Commander-in-Chief of the Reserve Army G. Himmler, "that in the end the contradictions between England, America and Russia, namely between England and America, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other, or between Russia and America, on the one hand, and England, on the other ... will lead to the fact that sooner or later this coalition will fall apart, like all other coalitions. When this happens, no danger will threaten Germany. With the split of the anti-Hitler coalition, the fascist leadership linked the hope that it would be able to conclude a separate peace with any of its members.

Understanding that the USSR personifies the main threat to fascism, some of Hitler's close associates are shy or have illusions about the cessation of the now hopeless armed struggle in the east. Propaganda Minister I.P. Goebbels at the beginning of 1944 invited Hitler to start "peace talks with Stalin." In July 1944, German Foreign Minister I. Ribbentrop, acting through an SS Standartenführer sent to Sweden under the guise of a "private person" (the title of

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corresponded to the rank of "colonel" in the German army) P. Kleist, unsuccessfully tried to secretly probe the possibility of establishing contacts with Soviet diplomatic workers. The same attempt was made in October. However, she did not give any results. The Soviet Union has always ruled out the possibility of separate negotiations with Hitler's Germany, and has consistently pursued a course towards the complete and final defeat of the fascist bloc. It remained true to its allied obligations to other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition and made a decisive contribution to the just liberation struggle of the peoples against the fascist enslavers.

The plan for concluding a separate peace with the USSR was nothing more than the fruit of the heated imagination of the Nazis, distraught with fear. It is of interest only from the point of view that indicates the calculations of the fascist German leadership to use anti-Soviet tendencies in the policy of the USA and Britain.

Plans to achieve a separate peace with the United States and Britain in order to avoid total defeat received the greatest circulation in Germany. By the summer of 1944, when the Western Allies opened a second front in Europe, many German military leaders began to realize that the war was lost. Field Marshal K. Rundstedt and E. Rommel, who commanded the German troops in the west, on June 29 advised Hitler to "draw political conclusions" from martial law and, having made peace with the USA and England, to throw all their forces into "keeping the defense in the east." Hitler, on the other hand, believed that for the success of negotiations with the Americans and the British, the necessary prerequisites did not yet exist. He still hoped to intimidate the United States and England with the power of Germany and on this basis enter into negotiations with them. The fascist command placed great hopes on the use of the newly created new weapons - V-1 jet unmanned projectiles and V-2 missiles. First of all, the use of these weapons, Hitler sought to achieve

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the same goal, which he failed to achieve in the autumn of 1940 - to persuade England to conclude peace by terrifying air strikes. The shelling of British cities began on the night of June 13, 1944. In August 1944, the issue of bombing New York was discussed at Hitler's headquarters. However, this intention turned out to be impossible due to the lack of ultra-long-range bombers. Hopes for a "miracle weapon" did not materialize either. The V-1, which had a limited speed (650 km per hour), was successfully fought by the British air defense. We were practically invincible V-2, but few were produced.

However, Hitler continued to believe in the possibility of concluding a separate peace with the Western allies. "I do not need to prove that I will not miss such an opportunity," he declared. But it is naive to hope for a favorable political moment in a period of heavy defeats. Such moments may arise in case of success ... There will come a time when tensions between the allies will intensify so much that there will be a break. In world history, coalitions have always failed. Even under the existing circumstances, we must wait a little longer." The fascist dictator saw a way out in using the anti-Soviet tendencies in the policy of the Western powers in the interests of fascism. He believed that at the last moment they would not allow the USSR to destroy the stronghold of anti-communism in Europe.

The reason for such a hope to Hitler could be given by the increasing news about the growth of anti-Soviet sentiments among the British ruling circles, in particular, the message of the German ambassador to Turkey, F. Papen, that

the English consul in Adana Mersin, in a public speech about the allegations of a "growing Bolshevik threat," stated: "By the end of the war, England and America will be strong enough to order the Russians to stop where they see fit." The Hitlerite clique considered the achievement of an "honorable peace for Germany" as its main political goal during this period. Achieving it, the military-political leadership of the Reich

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in the second half of 1944, it took a course to prolong the war. At the same time, the main stake was placed on the contradictions between the imperialist countries, on the one hand, and the USSR, on the other. In order to persuade the Western allies to negotiate, the Nazis did their best to improve the strategic position of Germany and, above all, to stabilize the Eastern Front.

A week after the start of the operation in the Ardennes, Hitler spoke at the "Eagle's Nest" to the commanders of divisions and individual units. In his speech, he summed up the first results of the operation "Watch on the Rhine" in the Ardennes and defined the tasks in the new offensive operation "Nordwin" in the area of Strasbourg. The reader can read excerpts from the speech of the Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces.

"... What is the current situation from a military point of view? Anyone who follows the world-historical conflicts in the known world will find very many situations of a similar nature, perhaps even much more difficult situations than the one we are experiencing today. After all, we must not forget that at the moment we are defending the territory of the empire and the regions adjacent to it, that these areas are much larger than those that Germany ever possessed, and, secondly, that our armed forces, taken by themselves, are still and today more powerful than any other army that exists on earth. Anyone who wishes to get a correct idea as a whole must understand the following: if we evaluate the military power of any of the powers opposing us in isolation, be it Russia, England or America, then there can be no doubt: we would have dealt with each of these states. one on one

in the blink of an eye.

From a military point of view, the decisive factor is that in the West we are now moving from fruitless defensive actions to offensive ones. And indeed, only an offensive can again give this war in the West the direction we want. Oboro

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it would not put us in a hopeless position in a short time: everything would depend only on the extent to which the enemy manages to build up the force of influence of his arriving equipment. Moreover, the offensive will require not so many large casualties in manpower, as is usually imagined. The opinion that an offensive under any circumstances is accompanied by more serious bloodshed than a defense does not correspond to reality. We know it on our own

experience.

...And in the current offensive, a similar picture emerges. When I imagine how many divisions the enemy threw into the Ardennes, how many he lost by prisoners alone (and this is the same as the dead, these are irretrievable losses), when I add to this the rest of his losses in manpower, I sum up with losses in equipment and other property, when I compare all this with our losses, the conclusion becomes undoubted: even a short offensive carried out by us these days immediately ensured an immediate defuse of the tense situation along the entire front. True, the offensive did not bring, unfortunately, the decisive results that could have been expected from it, but the detente that has now begun is still colossal. The enemy had to abandon all offensive plans. He was forced to completely regroup his forces. Connections that are already battered in battles, he is forced to use again on the front line. All his operational plans have been completely thwarted. The public exposes the armed forces to merciless criticism. The enemy also suffered a psychological defeat. He is already forced to announce that there is no point in even thinking about ending the war before August, and perhaps even before the end of next year. So, we see a complete change in the situation, which two weeks ago would have been considered absolutely incredible. This is the real result of the battle.

... The task set before our new offensive does not go beyond the limits of those possibilities, which

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which our troops have. From our side, eight divisions will participate in the operation. Except for the one that comes from Finland (6th SS Panzer Division "Nord"), the rest, of course, are badly beaten in battle. Partially they are replenished. Keep in mind that the enemy that will be in front of us (five divisions, or perhaps only four, or perhaps only three) does not have fresh forces, he is also battered. The only exceptions are his one and only division, located directly on the Rhine, and the 12th American Panzer Division; but regarding the latter there is still no exact data - whether it works at all

on this area. In addition, she only recently arrived at the front and has not yet participated in the battles. The rest of the enemy formations in this sector are battered, like ours. Undoubtedly, the correlation of forces here will be such that it is impossible to wish for a better one.

If this operation is successful, it will lead to the destruction of a certain part of the group of divisions that will turn out to be against us south of the section of the Ardennes penetration. The described operation will immediately be followed by a new one. It will be followed by another blow. I hope that in this way we will be able first of all to defeat these American formations located south of the Ardennes. The mobilization of forces for this offensive and for subsequent attacks required the greatest courage, and this courage, on the other hand, involves great risk. Therefore, if you hear those that things are not very good in the southern sector of the Eastern Front, in Hungary, then it should be clear to you: we, of course, cannot be equally strong everywhere. We have lost so many allies. And now, in connection with the betrayal of our dear comrades-in-arms, we, unfortunately, have to gradually retreat within the ever narrower circle of encirclement. But in spite of all this, it was possible to keep the front in the east by and large. We will stop the enemy advance on the southern wing as well. We will stand as a wall in his path. We managed, in spite of everything, to create many new divisions,

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provide them with weapons, restore the fighting efficiency of the old divisions, including replenishing their weapons, putting the tank divisions in order, stockpiling fuel. It was also possible, very importantly, to restore the combat effectiveness of aviation, so that during the day a whole series of sorties can be made again, if only the weather does not interfere. Our aircraft of new models are already entering service, and aviation can finally attack the rear of the enemy in the daytime, and he is not in a position to oppose it. And one more thing: we managed to find so many artillery, projectiles, etc., tanks, as well as infantry divisions, that it was possible to restore at least the balance of forces in the west. This in itself is a miracle. It required continuous efforts, many months of labor and constant perseverance even in small things.

In conclusion, I would like to call on you to take up the forthcoming operation with all your passion, all your energy, all your strength. She is one of those who are crucial. Its success will absolutely automatically lead to the success of the next strike. And the success of the next, second operation will automatically entail the elimination of any threat to the left flank of our advancing grouping. If successful, we will, in essence, completely hack into

west a good half of the enemy's front. And then we'll see. I think that the enemy will not be able to offer long-term resistance to those 45 German divisions which, at any time, will be able to take part in the offensive. Then we will still argue with fate.

As you can see, Hitler's speech is imbued with a feeling of deep optimism in assessing the future of Germany. It is clearly propagandistic in nature, designed, firstly, to instill confidence in those present in the expediency of the decisions taken, to make, secondly, the Anglo-American command think about the possible prospects for fierce fighting on the Western Front and the expediency of concluding a separate peace.

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Thus, the main goal of the operations "Watch on the Rhine" and "Nordvin" was expressed in the desire of the military-political leadership of Germany to achieve an "honorable peace" at the expense of disagreements, which, in their opinion, are inevitable between the Soviet Union and the allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. During a difficult time for the Anglo-American troops, the Red Army's transition to the offensive on the central sector of the Soviet-German front finally thwarted Hitler's plan. He, apparently, clearly realized that in the near future the main events were unfolding in the east. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht leaves the Eagle's Nest Headquarters.

From the diary of the head of Hitler's office, his assistant in the leadership of the Nazi Party M. Bohr
mana:

"Saturday, January 13: in the morning the Bolsheviks went on the offensive.

Monday, 15 January: In view of the great offensive in the east, the Führer returns to Berlin. Arrival of the special train at 11.30.

From that day on, all the attention of the leaders of the Wehrmacht is focused on the Soviet-German (Eastern)

front.

Chapter 2

EASTERN FRONT.
THE ENEMY IMPROVES THE DEFENSE

By the beginning of 1945, the Nazi command assessed the situation on the Soviet-German front as follows: "Given the long preparation time, which provided the enemy with extensive replenishment and combat training of his formations, and also taking into account far-reaching plans (Prague, Breslavl, Poznan, Graudenz, Danzig and, finally, Berlin), it is to be expected that the Soviet command in the future offensive will plan a decisive blow to destroy the German army. Having established the concentration of large forces of the Red Army in the area between Warsaw and the Carpathians, as well as against Army Group Center in East Prussia, the fascist command began to prepare to repel a major Soviet offensive there. At the same time, the German General Staff assumed that before the start of a large offensive by the Soviet troops, an operation would be carried out to destroy the Kurland grouping, followed by an operation in East Prussia. The Hitlerite command believed that the operation against Army Group Center in East Prussia would be carried out by the troops of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian Fronts with a strike from the Warsaw area in the direction of Allenstein. At the same time, the offensive of the Ukrainian fronts was expected in order to defeat the grouping in southern Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. And only by

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After these operations, the Soviet troops, according to the assumption of the German General Staff, were to go on the offensive in the sector from Warsaw of the Sandomierz AO directly in the Berlin direction.

Based on this assessment of the situation, the fascist German high command strengthened the flank groupings at the expense of the reserve and, in particular, by regrouping the 4th SS Panzer Corps from the Warsaw region to Hungary. On the southern sector of the front, the Nazis intended to defeat the Soviet troops, liberate the grouping surrounded in the Budapest region, restore the positional defense front along the Danube and gain a foothold on this line. The liberated forces were intended for transfer to the Warsaw-Berlin direction. Only in the first days of January did the German headquarters establish that the main forces of the Red Army were concentrating for an attack in the zone between Warsaw and Jaslo. However, in the days remaining before the start of the Soviet offensive, a serious regrouping of German troops turned out to be practically impossible.

Preparing to repel the offensive of the Red Army, Hitler signed a decree "On total mobilization for the needs of the war."

"The military situation requires," it said, "the full use and involvement of all

forces for the needs of the armed forces and the military industry. Therefore, I order: Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, President of the Reich Defense Council, to subordinate the entire social life of the state in all respects to the requirements of total warfare. To carry out this task, he suggested that I establish the position of Imperial Commissioner for Total War. This imperial plenipotentiary must take special care to ensure that all social events are consistent with the goals of total war and that no forces are diverted from the Wehrmacht and the war economy. He must inspect the entire state apparatus, including

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tea the imperial railways, the imperial post office and all public institutions, organizations and enterprises, so that through the complete rationalization of the use of personnel and material resources, the abolition and limitation of tasks of little importance for the conduct of war, the simplification of the organizational structure and production processes, free up the maximum number of people for the use of their in the armed forces and the military industry ... "

In the zone of the forthcoming Soviet offensive, the main forces of Army Group A (from January 26 - Center) were defending. He headed it until January 17, 1945, Colonel General and. Garne, later Colonel General F. Scherner. Both generals were participants in the First World War. General Garnet, according to G. Guderian, "a calm, confident, brave and resolute person" with a sober mind and cold mind, in World War II he commanded a division, corps, army, army group. General Scherner, one of the first German officers who joined the National Socialist movement, commanded the 19th mountain corps in the Arctic, the 40th tank corps in the Ukraine on the Soviet-German front. From February 1944, he served as chief of staff of the ground forces, according to the employees, "pedantic and somewhat selfish", he took command of the army group from April of the same year.

By the beginning of hostilities, Army Group A had 560,000 soldiers and officers, about 5,000 guns and mortars, over 1,200 tanks and assault guns. Its composition included the 9th and 17th field armies, the 4th tank army. There were 4 tank and 2 motorized divisions in reserve. In total, the army group had 28 divisions and 2 brigades. During the battle, in order to restore the defense, the Wehrmacht command sent about 40 divisions to Poland from the west, from the depths of Germany and other sectors of the Soviet-German front.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

The headquarters of the 9th Army was formed on the basis of the Vostok Corps Command. In the east, since May 1941 in Army Group Center, since December 1944 in Army Group A, since February 1945 in Army Group Vistula.

The headquarters of the 17th Army was formed in December 1940. Since June 1941, as part of Army Group South, since July 1942 in Army Group A, since April 1944 in Army Group South Ukraine, since October 1944 in Army Group A, since February 1945 in Army Group Center.

Until December 31, 1941, the headquarters of the 4th Panzer Army was called the headquarters of the 4th Panzer Group. Since June 1941 in the Army Group "North", since October 1942 in the Army Group "Center", since February 1943 in the Army Group "Don", since March 1943 in the Army Group "Northern Ukraine", since October 1944 in Army Group A (Center).

The 6th enemy air fleet included the 1st, 4th, 51st, 53rd, 54th and 55th bomber squadrons, the 77th squadron of dive bombers, the 10th assault squadron (FV-190 aircraft); 52nd fighter squadron, 1st and 100th night fighter squadrons, 2nd, 6th, 10th, 54th and 121st reconnaissance groups, as well as the reconnaissance group of the main command (long-range reconnaissance). Enemy aviation was based at the following main airfields: Modlin, Sokhachev, Kutno, Lodz, Tomaszow, Kielce, Czestochowo, Breslau, Poznan. In addition, she had a significant number of field airfields and sites that made it possible to conduct combat operations in the winter. The material part of enemy aviation consisted of several types of aircraft. The bombers were represented by Xe-111 and Yu-88 aircraft. The main fighter was the FV-190 (it was also used as an attack aircraft). Aircraft of the Yu-87 type (dive bombers) were almost absent. In total, up to 650 enemy aircraft were expected to operate in the zone of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. The air defense of the enemy was mainly organized in the areas of important installations and concentrations of his troops. According to agents and air reconnaissance, the enemy had 12 anti-aircraft artillery

divisions. Based on regular calculations, corrected by information from various sources, the enemy had 95 batteries of 105-150-mm guns, 27 batteries of 88-mm guns

and 96 batteries of 20 mm guns, for a total of 218 batteries of four guns with a total of 872 anti-aircraft guns. The densest grouping of enemy anti-aircraft artillery was located in the area of the Magnushevsky bridgehead, where up to 40 batteries were installed, and in the Warsaw area - 25 batteries each.

The troops of the 9th German Army under the command of General of Tank Troops S. Lutvits, a participant in the First World War, who had rich experience in command and control, defended themselves against the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. The army was located on a 230-kilometer front from Dembe on the Western Bug to Jozefow on the Vistula. By the beginning of December 1944, it consisted of four tank and one army corps or twelve divisions, of which four were tank divisions. Nine divisions were in the first echelon, occupying the main defensive zone, and three divisions were in reserve.

The 4th SS Panzer Corps, consisting of two divisions (the 3rd SS Panzer Division "Dead Head" and the 5th SS Panzer Division "Viking"), on a 20-kilometer front, covered the approaches to the Modlin fortress, located at the confluence of the Western Bug to the Vistula. The 46th Panzer Corps, consisting of two infantry divisions (73rd and 337th), defending on a 70-kilometer front along the western bank of the Vistula and the Pilica River, covered the Warsaw direction directly. The 8th Army Corps, consisting of three divisions (251st, 6th and 45th), was also located on the front from the mouth of the Pilica River to Yakovets (the front stretched about 80 km), with the main task of defense against the Magnushevsky bridgehead. The 56th Panzer Corps, consisting of two infantry divisions (17th and 214th), took up defense on a 45-kilometer front against the Puławy bridgehead. The 40th Panzer Corps, consisting of two tank (25th and 19th) and 174th infantry divisions, was in the reserve of the 9th Army and was located in the Radom area.

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During December, some changes took place in the enemy grouping in front of the 1st Belorussian Front. In connection with the advance of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in Hungary, the German command was forced to withdraw the 4th SS Panzer Corps from the 9th Army and regroup it to the south. At the same time, the 391st security division arrived in the army. As a result, on January 14, the 9th German Army consisted of seven infantry and two tank divisions, a barrage brigade, a separate regiment and 14 separate battalions. In the first echelon, in a strip of 230 km, seven infantry divisions (73, 337, 251, 6, 45, 17, 214th), a separate regiment and all separate battalions defended. The main efforts were concentrated against the bridgeheads occupied by the Soviet troops. There were also reserves here: the 25th and 19th tank, 174th infantry divisions. Therefore, pro-

up to 12 infantry, three tank divisions, a barrage brigade of individual regiments and up to 50 settlement battalions could operate against the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front (including part of the reserves of Army Group A). The 1st Ukrainian Front was defended by the troops of the 4th Panzer and 17th Armies, which were part of Army Group A, whose headquarters was located in Krakow.

The 4th Panzer Army covered the Sandomierz-Czestochowa direction. Its headquarters was located in Kielce. In the first line were the 42nd Army and 48th Tank Corps. The 24th tank corps of this army was withdrawn from army subordination and constituted the reserve of the army group commander. The 42nd Army Corps (70th sapper brigade, 342nd, 72nd, 88th and 291st infantry divisions with reinforcements), covering the Radom direction from the south and the Kielce direction from the east, occupied a defensive line along the western bank of the Vistula and further along northern face of the Sandomierz bridgehead. The 48th Panzer Corps, consisting of the 168th, 68th and 304th Infantry Divisions with reinforcements, covering the Endrzejów direction, was located opposite the western front of the Sandomierz bridgehead. In the second echelon of the army, in addition to special units, there were

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two battle groups, one with 10,000 men, the other with 3,000 men.

The Krakow direction was covered by the troops of the 17th Army. The 59th Army Corps, consisting of the 371st, 359th, and 544th Infantry Divisions, was defending on the Shchutsin-Yaslo sector. South of the 59th Corps, to the border between the 1st and 4th Ukrainian Fronts, the 78th and 545th Infantry Divisions of the 11th SS Army Corps were defending. In the second echelon of the army was the 344th Infantry Division, located southwest of Tarnow.

In the reserve of the commander of Army Group "A" was the 24th Panzer Corps, consisting of the 16th and 17th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions (the headquarters of the corps was located in Kielce), as well as 601, 602, 603, 608 1st infantry and 391st security divisions.

In the enemy's first line of defense there were 12 divisions, 4 assault gun brigades, a sapper brigade, and 28 separate units (infantry, artillery, tank). In the second line, there were 4 infantry, 2 tank and motorized divisions, as well as 13 separate units. Preparing to repel the offensive of the Soviet troops, the Wehrmacht command created a developed system of defensive structures, echeloned to a depth of 500 km. The rivers Vistula, Warta, Oder (Odra) were equipped in engineering terms. The system of defensive lines included sub-

the cities and fortresses of Modlin, Warsaw, Radom, Lodz, Kielce, Krakow, Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), Poznan, Breslau (Wroclaw), Opaln (Opole), Schneidemuhl (Pila), Glogau (Glogow) and many others prepared for street fighting.

From the report at the meeting of the Military Council of the chief of engineering troops of the 1st Belorussian Front - Lieutenant General A.I. Proshlyakov:

"... The enemy prepared seven defensive lines for defense in engineering terms.

Vistula defensive line. It consists of four defensive bands, echeloned to a depth of 30-70 km, and a cut-off position on the river. Pilica.

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Work on the construction of the Vistula defensive line began in August 1944. The forward edge of the main line of defense ran along the western bank of the Vistula, deviating towards the enemy against the Magnuszewski and Puławski bridgeheads. This line of defense has reached a depth of 5-8 km and includes: a position of combat outpost, removed 200-300 m from the front edge of the main line of defense and consisting of separate firing cells and machine-gun platforms, interconnected by communication passages; two or three defensive positions, consisting of two or four trenches each and 1500-2000 m apart from one another; from cut positions from one or two trenches; separate strongholds in the depth of defense.

Each defensive position consists of two to four trenches of a full profile and has 15-30 machine-gun platforms, 50-60 rifle cells, 30-40 dugouts and dugouts per 1 km of the front.

The front edge of the main line of defense is covered with solid obstacles of Bruno's spiral in two or three rows and a wire net on low stakes in three or four rows, equipped with sound and light signaling. In the monitored areas, these obstacles are strengthened by land mines and anti-personnel mines. At 30-50 m in front of the wire obstacles, continuous minefields with a strip of 50-100 m were installed, consisting mainly of anti-personnel mines ... "

Rear army defensive line. He adjoins the left flank to the Vistula, at the mouth of the river. Bzura, and runs from north to south along the Bzura and Pilica rivers, intended to cover the main highways and railways running from Warsaw to the west and southwest. It has a depth of 3-4 km, built 60-120 km from the forward edge of the main line of defense. It passes along a slightly crossed

through the junctions of railways and highways in the cities of Sochaczew, Lovshch, Skierniewice, Rawa-Mazowiecka and Tomaszow. The last three cities are strong enemy strongholds located on the dominating

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river banks. This defensive line consists of two positions, equipped with two or three trenches, with a developed network of communication passages, anti-tank obstacles along the front edge and an anti-tank ditch behind the first position. In the junctions of highways and railways and in areas where there is a danger of tanks, the enemy has set up strongholds reinforced with long-term fortifications.

Bartovsky defensive line. This defensive line, under construction since June 1944, is the rear for the German Army Group. In the northern part it consists of two defensive lines, passing 20-30 km from one another.

The first defensive line runs along the line of Wloclawek, Izbica, Klodawa, the second - along the line of Thorn (Torun), Radzeyuv, Piotrkow, Slesin, Konin and further along the left bank of the river. Warta to Sieradz. The defense zone consists of two positions. The first position has two tran necks, the second - one. Between the positions there is a continuous anti-tank ditch. The trenches are connected by communication passages, equipped with 20-30 machine-gun platforms, 60-120 rifle cells, 10-15 brussel dugouts per 1 km of the front.

The second line of defense also consists of two positions, equipped: the first with two trenches, the second with one. In addition, anti-tank ditches run behind the trenches. The equipment and density of structures on the second line of defense are similar to the first. In the area Kolo, Unijów, in front of the leading edge, flooding of the river floodplain is envisaged. Wart with the help of earthen dams 2-3 m high.

Large settlements are prepared for all-round defense. Around the cities, contours within a radius of 2-6 km, consisting of a closed ring of an anti-tank ditch and 2-3 trenches, 6-10 reinforced concrete firing structures for circular firing, 2-5 reinforced concrete command posts and shelters for guns. The stone buildings on the outskirts are adapted to be driven from them

fire.

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Poznan defensive line. This line passed along the line Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), Poznan,

Ostrow It consists of one or two trenches, covered in some areas by anti-tank ditches and wire obstacles. Between Poznań and Oboronica, a number of long-term firing structures were built, skillfully disguised as the structures of settlements. The left flank of the Poznań defensive line rests on the Bromberg fortified area, which covered the Danzig direction, and the center is the Poznań fortress. On the former German-Polish border there is a line of long-term frontier fortifications - the sixth line of long-term fortifications. The construction of border fortifications was carried out in the period 1932-1937 and 1943-1944. The leading edge runs along the slopes of high, wooded hills, both providing good visibility and fire. It consists of the Pomeranian and Meseritz fortified regions. Ahead of it is the fordedfield with the leading edge on the Landeck, Schneidemühl line; further along the north bank of the river. Varta and along the western bank of the river. Odra passes the fifth line of cover for the fortified area.

The seventh Oder defensive line runs along the western bank of the river. Oder from the coast of the Baltic Sea to Grünberg.

The most developed and fortified are the Vistula and the sixth lines of long-term fortifications, as well as such fortresses as Warsaw, Modlin, Thorn (Torun), Poznań, Glogau. structures designed for a garrison of 60-120 people. On the surface of the structures there were 3-8 machine-gun caps, mortar and flamethrower installations. The protective thicknesses of reinforced concrete walls and coatings reached 2.5 m, and armored caps - up to 350 mm, which ensured from a direct hit by a 203-mm projectile. The structures were carefully adapted to the terrain and masks

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adapted to its general background, equipped with electric light, water supply, ventilation and communication facilities. In the Liebenau area, twenty-two Panzerwerks were connected by underground reinforced concrete posterns. In the main 30-kilometer barrier in the central group (ensemble) "Hochwalde" an underground aircraft engine factory was equipped.

The field filling of the fortified area consisted of three continuous trenches equipped with firing cells with a density of 50-60 and machine-gun platforms 15-30 per 1! km front. Near each long-term structure there were reinforced concrete points with circular fire, connected by covered communication halls. 30-40 m from the first trench around

long-term structures and on combat coverings, wire obstacles in 3-7 rows of stakes were installed.

The leading edge was covered by a system of lakes connected by canals equipped with dams, which made it possible to flood and swamp approaches in a strip up to 600 m wide. In areas that did not have natural barriers, anti-tank ditches were dug and reinforced concrete and metal gouges were installed "). Sliding bridges were built at the intersections of obstacles with roads, closed with metal barriers and on gouges. A developed network of highways ensured uninterrupted supply and rapid regrouping of enemy troops.

From the report of the shipab of the engineering troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front dated January 10, 1945.

.. Numerous documents captured with the Soviet troops during the offensive, and the testimonies of prisoners indicate that the German command, expecting a decisive offensive by the Red Army, is seriously preparing for the upcoming defensive battle. In addition to the main (Vistula) defense

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The front line, on which the first line troops are stationed, has five rear defensive lines with a developed system of trenches, trenches, barbed wire, anti-tank ditches, minefields and other engineering structures. In addition, there are several cut-off and intermediate lanes and positions. The Germans began to build field defensive lines and structures in the Upper Silesian and Bres Lavl directions with the exit of Soviet troops to the Vistula River. Defensive work was carried out at an exceptionally fast pace. In addition to the engineering troops, military schools and courses were involved in them, as well as the local population and the military.

prisoners.

The front edge of the main defensive line runs along the western bank of the river. The Vistula to Zavikhost, then goes around the Sandomierz bridgehead, in the Rataje region crosses the Vistula and beyond. The main defensive line is the most heavily fortified. It consists of three four positions, equipped with a large number of machine-gun, mortar and artillery points; The bunker, observation posts, dugouts, shelters and buildings adapted for defense are interconnected by a wide network of communication passages and covered from

cut positions.

In front of the western front of the Sandomierz bridgehead, where our troops were to deliver the main blow, the main defensive zone consists of three positions. Its total depth is 12-15 km. The first position consists of two or three lines of continuous and intermittent full profile trenches. Two or three rows of barbed wire (mainly Bruno's spiral) were set up in front of the trenches, and anti-tank and anti-personnel minefields were placed at short intervals. Behind the trenches there are residential dugouts with overlappings of two or three runs of logs, covered with earth 50-60 cm from above. Second position removed

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from the first to 1.5-3 km, it is basically a continuous trench of a full profile, equipped with machine-gun platforms and communication passages into the depths. It is also reinforced with engineering barriers. The third position is one continuous trench with remote machine-gun platforms.

The firing positions of regimental and anti-tank artillery, as well as mortar groups, are located between the first two positions. The firing positions of the rest of the artillery are placed behind the second position. All of them are well equipped, have slots, blinds and are adapted to all-round defense. The enemy equipped the settlements as strongholds, encircling them with two or three rings of trenches. From the front, in the tank-prone areas, the trenches are covered with anti-tank ditches.

The density of engineering barriers within the first position of the main defensive zone is not the same. For example, in the section Rakow, Szydłów on | km of the front there are: trenches and communication passages up to 3.5 km, bunker 0.5, dugouts 1, forest blockages 0.1 km, wire obstacles 0.9 km, minefields 0.72 km. On the section Petruw, Rakow on ! km of the front is: trenches and communication passages up to 2.3 km, bunker 1.6, wire obstacles 1.3 km, minefields 0.7 km. In the Rakow area, the density of engineering barriers is decreasing and per 1 km of the front was: trenches and communication passages 1.4 km, wire obstacles 0.2 km and minefields 1.1 km. The greatest density of engineering barriers is created between the first and second trenches of the first position. This is explained by the fact that with the beginning of our offensive, the Germans expect to leave the first line of trenches and put up the main resistance on the second line. To the north of the Sandomierz bridgehead, an intermediate defensive zone was created in the rear of the main defensive zone. Each of these

The los consists of two or three lines of intermittent trenches reinforced with barbed wire and minefields.

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The first defensive belt, 3-5 km deep, runs along the line of Nowe Miasto, Wislice, and further along the Dunajec and Byala rivers. It consists of three lines of trenches, equipped with a significant number of open gunnery and machine-gun positions, connected to each other and to the artillery positions by communications. The first rear lane is connected by communications with the second rear defensive lane. The third rear defensive line goes from Burzenin through Mstuv, Zharki, Olkusz on Krzenovice. It consists of two lines of trenches, 200-300 m apart from one another, and a well-developed system of communications. Behind the trenches, an anti-tank ditch 4-5 meters wide and up to 3 meters deep was dug. Wire fences with three stakes and minefields were installed in front of the front edge of the defensive zone. Large settlements between the second and third rear lines, including the cities of Piotrkow and Radomsko, have been turned into strongholds.

The fourth defensive strip runs along the river. Varta to Kaluga, then through Panki, Appeared fits the Silesian industrial region and covers it from the east, passing along the western bank of the river: Pshemsha. On the rest of the front, this strip consists of two lines of trenches equipped with firing cells, machine-gun platforms, dugouts, dugouts, interconnected by communication passages. Along the western bank of the river Warta is a chain of temporary fortifications, created back in peacetime. These fortifications were a continuation of the forefield of the Mezeritsky fortified area, located in the offensive zone of the 1st Belorussian Front. They consist of pillboxes and bunkers, which are located mainly along the main routes of communication, in separate strongholds and at road junctions. The first line of fortifications passes through Ostrow, Kempno, Kreizburg, Gros Strelitz. The second line behind the trap goes through Krotoshin, Milic, Jols and merges with the first line in the Kreizburg region. A large

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the number of anti-personnel and anti-tank obstacles.

The fifth and last rear defensive zone of the Germans, which the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front will have to meet during the offensive, has been prepared for

western bank of the river Oder. It is a strategic line covering the interior of Germany and is under the control of the German High Command. This fortified strip was built during 1932-1937. and modernized in 1941-1945. Its basis is the fortress fortified areas of Glogau, Breslau, Brig, Oppeln. Between them, along the entire bank of the Oder, stretches a chain of machine-gun tows, located one from the other at a distance of 100-200 m. Each such structure can accommodate from 8 to 25 people. Trenches and communication passages cover the entire coastal strip in a dense network. It should be added that during the operation, the border of the river. The Oder can be reinforced with additional engineering barriers and filled with troops, partly from the remnants of broken formations withdrawing from the Vistula, partly from reserves transferred from other fronts and brought up from the strategic rear ...

Improved field defense system tivnik.

The tactical defense zone with a total depth of up to 8-15 km included the main line of defense ("main battlefield", in German terminology) and the second line of defense ("positions of corps reserves"). The army corps of the first operational echelon of the army were located in this zone.

The operational defense zone with a depth of 60-80 km included the third army line of defense ("positions of army reserves"). At 16-25 km from the front edge of the main belt ("positions of the reserves of the army group"), which was being prepared 50-80 km from the front edge of the main belt. Behind it were strategic reserves.

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Within the limits of the first position, three lines of continuous trenches were already created, which served as a support for the advanced platoon strongholds of the first line and reserves (company and battalion), interconnected by communication channels. As a result, four lines equipped in terms of engineering were formed (including the forward edge of the platoon areas of the first line). The configuration and discontinuity of the front edge of the platoon areas of the first line created the conditions for conducting oblique fire and the construction of minefields that prevented the enemy from flanking maneuver on the front line. The trenches had a depth of 1.8-2 m and were equipped with cells that were used for firing arrows. The machine-gun trenches had a platform that made it possible to fire in a sector of 100-120°. Near the machine-gun platform in the steepness of the trench, a covered slot was arranged for the calculation.

In separate sections of the forward front edge of the main line of defense, a combat guard position was created, connected to the first position by communication lines. It defended itself with forces up to infantry platoons detached from the companies of the first echelon, covered itself with minefields and barbed wire. The presence of a combat guard position, according to the plan of the German command, was supposed to mislead the Soviet troops regarding the location and outline of the main line of defense, reduce the effectiveness of defeating the defending troops, and exclude the surprise of an attack on the front edge of the main line of defense. The tactical densities of forces and equipment were about 1.2 for infantry battalions, 16-20 guns for artillery, and 5-7 units for tanks and assault guns per 1 km of front. Particular attention was paid to the organization of anti-tank defense. To the depth of the tactical zone, as a rule, three lines of location of anti-tank weapons were prepared. The activity of the defense increased as a result of the participation in counterattacks not only of divisional, but also of regimental reserves, as well as due to the maneuver of forces and means on the scale of the strongholds of the companies of the first echelon.

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When wedging into the defense, the battle was transferred to the communication moves. It was combined with decisive and daring counterattacks, even with small forces (before secession). The headquarters of the high command of the Wehrmacht sought to make the most of the experience gained. She once worked out special "Instructions on combat training of infantry based on the experience of fighting on the Eastern Front", which were essential for the further development of defensive battle tactics. Exceptional attention was paid to the role of fire in combat. It would be necessary to quickly concentrate the fire of various types of weapons

zheniya using flat and hinged

fire. "By concentrating in place and time the fire of all the types of weapons at our disposal," this document emphasized, "the fastest and most effective impact is achieved, all types of weapons must be able to maneuver and simultaneously operate in the bands indicated by them." Short range fire, especially against attacking tanks, was considered more effective than long range fire. It should be emphasized that during the artillery preparation of the attack by the Soviet troops, the enemy practiced the withdrawal of the main forces from the forward platoon strongholds to the second and even third trenches. He also used other elements of military cunning.

The tactics of the German fascist troops in the defense were designed to defeat the enemy in front of the forward edge of the "main battlefield" or, in extreme cases, inside the main line of defense. In the event of a wedging of the opposite

stubborn and persistent counterattacks were carried out, repeated, despite the losses, several times. The so-called "fire bags" were widely used. The withdrawal was masked by the activation of fire and the infliction of counter attacks. The containment resistance at the intermediate lines was carried out, as in the operational level, by the forces of the rear guards mounted on motor vehicles. Holding the tactical zone, and especially the main line of defense, was the basis of defensive actions.

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fascist German troops, since they did not have the strength to advance the occupation of lines in the operational depth. Defensive operations, both on an operational and tactical scale, were conducted with great tenacity and activity, with extensive use of counterattacks (counterattacks).

Preparing to repel the upcoming offensive of the Red Army, the German government and the military command carried out another "super-total" mobilization, formed units of the Volkeshturn, and completed military formations. By January 12, the personnel and armament of many units and formations were brought to full strength. The infantry divisions of the 42nd Army Corps, for example, had 12,000 soldiers and officers each. The Hitlerite command, realizing the seriousness of the situation on the Eastern Front in January 1945, sent more and more forces here. "And so millions of Germans," wrote Colonel-General Heinz Guderian, who, according to his contemporaries, was a determined man, who had the richest experience in leading troops, comprehensive and thorough special training as an officer of the General Staff, "stood up before the enemy, ready to defend the German East from the most terrible thing that could happen - from the powerful onslaught of the Russians.

Trying by all means to raise the morale of soldiers and officers, which had noticeably declined after the heavy defeats of the Nazi army in 1944 on the Soviet-German front, fascist propaganda spread the rumor about the presence in Germany of large reserves and super-powerful weapons, and intimidated the Germans with the "Red Terror". "Victory or Siberia", "Rejoice in the war, for the world will be terrible" - such slogans were not fired on the pages of German newspapers and constantly sounded on the air.

In December 1944, an order was announced to the troops by the Chief of Staff of the Supreme High Command, Field Marshal V. Keitel, on the fight against defectors and the Red Army voluntarily surrendering

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missions. This order required "to shoot soldiers and officers of any rank who showed instability and cowardice on the battlefield." The operational pause in the actions of the parties on the central sector of the Soviet-German front, which had been established since the autumn of 1944, was explained by Goebbels' propaganda by the alleged lack of forces in the Red Army to break through such a powerful defense on the Vistula. By praising the invincibility of the positions on the Vistula, propagandizing the temporary successes of the counter-offensive in the Ardennes, intimidating their soldiers with retribution for the atrocities committed on Soviet territory, combined with cruel repressive measures, the Hitlerite leaders managed to maintain blind obedience in the troops, readiness for fanatical resistance.

resistance.

The construction of a strong defense by the enemy was largely facilitated by the terrain on which combat operations were to be conducted.

In the offensive zone of the 1st Belorussian Front, the region was characterized by a large number of rivers, lakes, swamps, as well as settlements of both rural and urban types. Thus, the Polish-German plain is crossed by the left tributaries of the Vistula, the rivers Netze, Warta, Oder (Odra) with their numerous tributaries and connecting canals. In the eastern part of the plain, the left tributaries of the Vistula: Bzura, Pilica, Radomka, Kamenka, flow to the northeast, and in the western part, the right tributary of the Oder River, the Warta, and its tributaries flow to the northwest. South of Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) and along the Polish-German border in the meridional direction there are also water barriers in the form of a group of lakes connected by canals into a common water system. Thus, most of all these rivers and lakes were an obstacle to the movement of Soviet troops to the west. The ice cover on the rivers during this period was characterized by uneven ice thickness in the upper and lower reaches of the rivers and the presence of polynyas.

The network of auto-drawn works was distinguished by a large density and a significant number of well-maintained roads with artificial turf. In the interfluvium of the Vistula and the Oder (Odra) there was a fairly large number of railways. Their average density reached 4 km per 100 km² area. All broad-gauge roads had European gauge (1435 mm). There were also a significant number of narrow-gauge roads. Most of the artificial structures on the roads, according to human intelligence, were prepared for undermining and destruction.

Both rural and urban settlements were dominated by stone houses with stone outbuildings and solid deep cellars and cellars. In the same theater of operations there were a significant number of such large industrial centers as Warsaw, Radom, Lodz, Lovpch, Kutno, Inowratslav, Gniesen, Schneidemühl, Landsberg, Schwerin, Schwiebus and others. These cities are characterized by large multistory buildings and a large number of factories and plants. The presence of a large number of large settlements (cities) with stone buildings allowed the German command to significantly strengthen its defenses, turning them into strongholds and defense centers. The fighting in January 1945 mainly unfolded on the territory of Poland and Silesia.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Poland is a state in Europe, in the Vistula and Odra basins. The capital is Warsaw. The believers are predominantly Catholics. The population is about 25 million people (1938), 34.8 million (1977).

In the 1st millennium, the population was Slavic tribes: Poles, Vistulas, Mazovlans and others. At the end of the 10th century, the early feudal Polish state arose, from 1025 - the kingdom. According to the Union of Lublin in 1569, it formed the state of the Commonwealth with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The Polish and Swedish interventions of the beginning of the 17th century in the Russian state ended in failure. Petersburg conventions of 1772, 1793 and 1795, the territory of the Commonwealth was divided between

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Prussia, Austria and Russia. In 1807, Napoleon created the Principality of Warsaw from part of the Polish lands. The Vienna Congress of 1814-1815 formed the Kingdom of Poland (transferred to Russia), some territories were transferred to Prussia and Austria. In 1915-1918 the Kingdom of Poland was occupied by the troops of Germany and Austria-Hungary. In August 1918, the Soviet government annulled the treaties on the division of Poland. In 1926, a regime of big magnates headed by J. Pilsudski was established. In September 1939 it was occupied by Nazi Germany. Western Ukraine and Western Belarus were taken by the Red Army under protection from the Nazi troops and, according to the decision of their population, were reunited with the Ukrainian SSR and the BSSR. Silesia is a historical Slavic region in the upper and middle reaches of the Odra. In the 10th century as part of the Polish state, in the 11th century - the lands of the Czech crown. Since 1556, under the rule of the Habsburgs, since 1742 - Upper Silesia (center - the city of Oppeln (Opole) and Lower Silesia (center - the city of Wroclaw). In 1922, 1/3 of Upper Silesia was transferred by the League of Nations to Poland.

In 1939 it was occupied by Germany.

Most of the region is occupied by the hilly Malopolska Upland. It is covered with intermittent forest areas and crossed by a number of meridional flowing rivers. The Kielce-Sandomierz and Krakow Uplands, being a continuation of the northern spurs of the Carpathian Mountains, reach 300-500 m in absolute height. The first has a more complex relief, approaching the character of the foothills; the second has the character of an undulating plain. Both hills are accessible to all branches of the military, but somewhat hamper maneuvering. About half of the region is covered with interspersed forests. Of the latter, the forests located north and northwest of Kielce, east and southeast (Sandomierz and Upper Silesia) deserve attention. The forests are mostly mixed species with a predominance of conifers.

Radomsko-Kielecki industrial region was one

him from the main centers of the military industry in Poland. In the cities of Ostrovets, Konsk, Skarzhisko, Kamenna, Kielce, there were the most important enterprises of ferrous metallurgy and the military industry. Between the towns of Konskie and Ostrovets lies the main area of iron ore mining. In the economy of Nazi Germany, the Radomsko-Kielecki region occupied not the last place, and therefore the Germans made every effort to defend it.

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Even more important for Germany were the cities of Krakow and the Upper Silesian coal-metallurgical region with its vast coal basin. The most important military factories and enterprises of the metallurgical, machine building, coal, chemical and other industries were concentrated here. This area was the second, after the Ruhr, coal and metallurgical base, which fed the enterprises of Germany.

Consequently, in military and economic terms, the territories of southwestern Poland and Silesia were of considerable value to Germany's ALA, and it could be foreseen that the German command would make every effort to hold this area. The stubborn German defense of southwestern Poland was also dictated by the fact that it was the last piece of land separating the front line from the territory of Germany itself. With the loss of Poland by the Germans, the war was transferred directly to the central region of the state and to the approaches to Berlin.

From a military-geographical point of view, the combat area

The military operations, which had a large number of natural defensive lines and large settlements, provided favorable conditions for defensive operations. At the same time, a well-developed network of roads leading to the front and along the front allowed the attacker to use a wide maneuver. The weather in the combat area in January 1945 was generally favorable for the ground forces, but frequent haze, fog and low clouds sharply limited the possibility of a massive use of aviation, especially during the breakthrough period and in the struggle for a bridgehead on the Oder.

Thus, the Soviet troops faced very difficult tasks. They were associated with breaking through a deeply echeloned enemy tactical defense zone developed in terms of engineering, forcing a number of water barriers, overcoming a large number of defensive lines such as fortified

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ny areas, mastery of fortress cities. In front of the troops of both the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were formations and formations of the Wehrmacht, which had extensive experience in combat operations against the Soviet troops, are characterized by high stability and activity in defense, equipped with weapons and equipment that have proven themselves in previous battles .

Chapter 3

THE PURPOSE OF THE SCORP. DECISIONS OF THE FRONT COMMANDERS

In 1945, the Soviet Armed Forces entered the prime of their combat power. In terms of saturation of military equipment and its quality, in terms of the level of combat skill of all personnel, in terms of moral and political state, they surpassed the enemy army. Despite the huge scale of the armed struggle on the Soviet-German front and heavy losses, the size of the Red Army increased by 400 thousand people in 1944 as a result of the mobilization of human contingents in the liberated territory and the conscription of young people. This ensured the timely replenishment of the active army, the formation of new units and formations of all types of troops.

Thanks to the heroic labor of the Soviet people and the enormous possibilities of the economy, the technical equipment of the Soviet Armed Forces continued to improve. The Red Army received in a timely manner

military equipment, weapons, equipment and ammunition. In 1944 military output accounted for about 52 per cent of the total gross industrial output. Compared to pre-war times, the output of aircraft increased 3.8 times, guns of all calibers 8 times, tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts 10 times. All this made it possible to increase the amount of combat equipment of the army in the field. In the most important offensive

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operations in 1943, one rifle division accounted for 180-200 guns and mortars, 14-17 tanks, 13-20 aircraft, and a year later - already 200-245 guns, 14-35 tanks and 22-46 aircraft. Great power reached the Soviet armored and mechanized troops. By the beginning of 1945, the active army had 15,100 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, and by the beginning of 1944 - 5628. During 1944 alone, the number of tanks in the Red Army increased by 13.1 percent, and self-propelled artillery installations - more than 5 times. The T-34 medium tank, the IS-2 heavy tank with a 122-mm cannon, the ISU-152, ISU-122, SAU-85, SAU-100 self-propelled artillery mounts outperformed tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts in terms of basic tactical and technical data. fascist German army. With an increase in the number of medium and heavy tanks, as well as self-propelled artillery installations, the Soviet command reinforced the active units and formations of armored and mechanized troops and created new large formations. As a result, it became possible to introduce two or three self-propelled artillery regiments into the staff of tank and mechanized corps.

The improvement of rocket artillery continued. By the end of 1944, the number of field rocket artillery installations of the BM-31-12 type amounted to one third of all rocket artillery. By the beginning of 1945, the Red Army had 7 guards mortar divisions, 40 guards mortar brigades, 105 guards mortar regiments and 40 guards mortar divisions.

During 1944 there were significant changes in the organizational forms of the Air Force. Air formations, which still retained a mixed organization, were reorganized into uniform formations. New aviation corps of the Reserve of the Supreme High Command were created. In December 1944, long-range aviation was reorganized into the 18th Air Army and subordinated to

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not to the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force. Long-range bombers began to be used more often not only for long-range targets, but also to support advancing troops and build up strikes by front-line aviation.

Army Group A in the strip from the lower reaches of the Western Bug to Yaslo was opposed by the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. South of Warsaw, they occupied and held operationally important bridgeheads on the left bank of the Vistula - Magnuszewski, Pulawski and Sandomierz. Troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front were operating north of Warsaw, capturing the Serotsky and Ruzhansky bridgeheads on the Narew River. South of the 1st Ukrainian Front, in the Carpathians, there were formations of the 4th Ukrainian Front. The troops of these fronts were intensively preparing for the forthcoming winter offensive.

Given that the enemy had a large grouping in Poland and created a defense in depth, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command replenished the composition of the fronts with people and military equipment. The 1st Belorussian Front, after replenishment, concentration and regrouping of troops, included eight combined arms armies, including the 1st Army of the Polish Army, two tank and one air armies, two tank and two cavalry corps. In addition, aviation of the Polish Army deployed on the basis of the 6th Soviet Air Army operated in the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front. The 1st Ukrainian Front included eight combined arms, two tank and one air armies, three tank corps, one mechanized and one cavalry. The troops of these fronts were deployed in a strip about 500 kilometers wide, comprising 31.5 percent of the combined arms and 43.2 percent of the tank and mechanized formations operating on the entire Soviet-German front.

The 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts had 163 divisions, 32,143 guns and mortars, about 7,000 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations, 5047

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aircraft. In total, there were almost 2204 thousand people in these fronts. Such a concentration of forces and means allowed the Soviet command to create a significant superiority over the enemy in the Warsaw-Berlin direction: in manpower - 5.5 times, in guns and mortars - 7.8 times, in tanks - 5.7 times, in aircraft - 17.6 times. The average operational density of troops in the entire offensive zone of the fronts was one rifle division per 3.7 kilometers, the density of artillery and tanks reached 64 guns and mortars, 12 tanks and self-propelled artillery installations per kilometer of the front.

The potential of the two fronts on the eve of the Vistula-Oder operation is disclosed in more detail in Tables 2-4. Comparing the data reflected in them, it is legitimate to note a number of provisions. First, both fronts included two tank armies, 7-9 tank and mechanized corps. With their skillful use, it was possible to achieve relatively high rates of advance and carry out wide maneuvers on the battlefield. Secondly, the fronts had a significant number of artillery units and formations, including two breakthrough artillery corps each, which ensured effective fire destruction of the enemy throughout the entire depth of the forthcoming operation. Thirdly, the fronts had a significant number of anti-tank guns (about 5 thousand), as well as anti-aircraft artillery (more than 3.5 thousand guns). The presence of more than 5,000 aircraft ensured the solution of the problem of maintaining air supremacy, as well as supporting the actions of both rifle and armored formations and formations. It is noteworthy that in the air armies a significant number (more than 30%) were attack aircraft. Fourthly, the high degree of manning of the fronts with vehicles (121,563 vehicles) contributed to the resolution of the complex problems of logistical support in the course of hostilities at a great depth and at a high pace.

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Table 3

COMBAT COMPOSITION OF THE TROOPS OF THE 1st BELARUSIAN AND 1st UKRAINIAN

FRONTS TO THE BEGINNING OF THE VISLA-ODER OPERATION

Associations, connections

and separate parts

1st Byelorussian- 1st Ukrainian
Front

Combined arms armies
Tank armies

Air armies Rifle corps
Rifle divisions

mechanized corps

Fortified areas s Cavalry
corps 3 Cavalry divisions 9 Tank
corps 11

'Individual armored

and self-propelled artillery brigades

'Separate tank and

shelves

self-propelled artillery 28 63
shelves

Artillery corps 4 Artillery divisions
6 12 Anti-aircraft artillery 11 7 | 18
divisions

'Separate artillery 10 21 brigades

fighter

anti-tank artillery - 7 16th brigades

Separate mortar brigades 1 2

'Individual Artillery th th 8
shelves

'Individual fighter

anti-tank artillery - 7 21 28 regiments

Separate anti-aircraft artillery regiments 13 10
23

'Individual mortar 9 11 20

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End of table 3

Associations, formations of the 1st Belorussian- 1st Ukrainian-Be
and separate parts of the Front Front

Guards mortar

reactive artillery divisions. 12

lerii

Separate guards

mortar brigades re- 2 \$ E

active artillery

Separate guards mi-

'regiments jet 13 12 25

artillery

Engineering teams 16 14 31

Table 4

COMBAT COMPOSITION AND NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT IN THE AIR ARMIES OF THE 1st BELARUSIAN AND 1st UKRAINIAN FRONTS

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE VISLA-ODER OPERATION

Number of connections

and aircraft in the fronts Total Forces
and means of the 1st Belorussian- 1st Ukrainian Front fronts
16 VA 2VA

Corps

Fighter E 6 Assault s 5

Bomber 2 3 Total:

8 14 Divisions Fighter 10 19

Assault 6 12

Bomber

5 11 Total: 21 42 Aircraft"

Fighters 1172 2303

Attack aircraft 735 775 1510

Bombers 327

417 744

Night bombers 172 120 292

Scouts 94 104 198 Total: 2459

2588 5047 Aircraft are shown only in
serviceable condition.

*

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The general strategic situation favored the Soviet Armed Forces,
which by the end of 1944 completely cleared the territory of the USSR
from the invaders, liberated the eastern part of Poland, and withdrew
its allies from the war on the side of Germany: Finland,

Romania and Bulgaria. Most of Hungary was also cleared of Hungarian-German fascists by the Red Army, and its capital, Budapest, with an enemy garrison of up to 180,000 entrenched in it, was surrounded. As a result of operations in 1944, the Red Army defeated and disabled up to 136 divisions of the Germans and their allies. Soviet troops pressed the 16th and 18th German armies to the Baltic Sea in the area southwest of Riga, approached the borders of East Prussia and invaded its territory, in Poland they reached the Vistula in its middle reaches and the Wisłoka River. In the south, the front of Soviet troops, crossing the Carpathians west of Uzhgorod, passed further along the southern border of Czechoslovakia to the Hron River, and in Hungary it went west of Budapest and east of Lake Balaton. In Yugoslavia, in the area west of Belgrade, the front of the Soviet troops merged with the front of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army.

The political and moral state of the Soviet soldiers and their unshakable faith in a speedy and final victory were of great importance in the defeat of the German fascist army. An important role in the moral and political training of the troops was played by the appeals of the Central Committee of the Party for the 27th anniversary of the Great October Revolution, and by the orders and speeches of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. With the transfer of hostilities outside the Soviet Motherland, the conditions for their conduct changed. In relation to the new situation, military councils, political agencies, party and Komsomol organizations restructured their work. They carried out work on the ideological and political education of the personnel, the development of a deep understanding of their duty as a liberator soldier. They were faced with a task of great political importance—to intensify the education of Soviet soldiers in the spirit of fraternal internationalism.

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solidarity with the workers of the liberated countries. Guided by the resolutions of the State Defense Committee of April 10 and October 27, 1944, and the directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, commanders and political workers carried out a tremendous amount of work in this direction.

Multifaceted political and educational work was carried out among the new recruits. Particular attention was paid to the soldiers who arrived from the areas liberated from the Nazi occupation, which for a considerable time were exposed to fascist and bourgeois-nationalist propaganda. Many fighters called up from the western regions of Belarus and Ukraine were illiterate, had not previously served in the army and had no combat experience. A careful approach to their upbringing and training was of great importance in preparing for the difficult final battles. Political bodies and party organizations worked on

further ideological and organizational strengthening of party organizations, strengthening their influence on the life and combat activities of subunits and units.

Recalls a member of the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front, General K.F. Telegin:

"... Our troops were on the territory of Poland, and this circumstance alone to a large extent determined the content of party political work. The theoretical basis for political studies with its personnel, especially officers, was the decisions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks on questions of relations between the USSR and Poland. The main attention was devoted to explaining the international MISSION of the Red Army, its liberation tasks, and preparing personnel for the undoubtedly fierce decisive battles that were to unfold in the near future in the main direction from Warsaw to Berlin.

Ahead, in the smoke of fires, lay a huge city, turned by the enemy into a powerful fortified area.

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with a well-organized fire system, the Vistula, one of the main water arteries of Europe, flowed, and the fierceness with which the Nazis tried to knock us off the captured bridgeheads testified once again to the enemy's calculations to give a decisive battle here, to the intention to delay the development of events catastrophic for themselves .

There was no doubt that the enemy's resistance this time would be greater than ever, dictated by circumstances of a strategic nature. With the loss of fortifications on the Vistula, the fascist German command will be forced to defend on lines that are much less suitable for organizing a stable defense, which will lead to a rapid advance of Soviet formations to the west. In turn, the loss of Poland meant the loss of the Silesian, Łódź, Poznań and Kielce-Radom industrial regions, and with them rather vast territories with developed agriculture. And, of course, the Nazi high command was aware that the shortest route to the central regions of the Reich, to the capital of the German state, ran through Poland.

Assessing the situation at the end of 1944, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, in determining the plan for the forthcoming strategic offensive operation, took into account a number of its components. Firstly, the enemy had a completely combat-ready group of troops in the central direction of the Soviet-German front, had in operation

in the rear area, a well-prepared system of defensive structures in terms of engineering. Secondly, the forces and means involved in the offensive made it possible, provided that they were used competently, to count on success. Thirdly, an important feature of the starting position for the offensive was that the front line of the enemy defense passed along the western bank of the Oder (Odra) River, at the same time, the Soviet troops had bridgeheads that made it possible to inflict dissecting blows on the enemy, not forsy

breaking this water barrier. 61

Marshal G.K. Zhukov:

“At the end of October 1944, at Headquarters, with the participation of some members of the State Defense Committee and the Chief of the General Staff, the question of the final operations of the Great

G.K. Zhukov of the Patriotic War ... Then

at the beginning of November 1944

I had to, on the instructions of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief

who needs to work hard on the main issues

mi of the final campaign of the war and, above all, over plans for operations in the Berlin direction.

I must note with satisfaction that our General Staff in this period stood at a high level in the art of planning major strategic offensive operations. Analyzing the situation, the General Staff correctly considered that the enemy would offer the greatest resistance to our troops in the Berlin direction. This was confirmed by the extremely poor results of the offensive operations of the troops in October (the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st Byelorussian Fronts) and their forced transition to the defensive in the first days of November along the entire western direction.

I fully agreed with the General Staff, with its chief operators A.I. Antonov, S.M. Shtemenko, A.A. Gryzlov and N.A. Lomov, who at all this

The work of operational management proved to be outstanding experts in operational-strategic planning. According to the General Staff, in the first place, our southern fronts were to launch an offensive.

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towards Vienna. This would inevitably compel the German command to redeploy considerable forces that stood against our western fronts to strengthen the southeastern strategic direction, on which the fate of the south and southeast of Germany depended.

When considering the plan for the offensive of the fronts in the western direction, a serious question arose about East Prussia, where the enemy had a large grouping and a highly developed defense based on long-term engineering structures, difficult terrain and strong stone buildings of settlements and cities. I had to state with regret the mistake that the Headquarters made by not accepting the proposal made back in the summer to strengthen the fronts operating in the East Prussian sector. After all, it was built on breaking the enemy defenses on the move with the successful development of the Belarusian operation. Now the enemy grouping in East Prussia could seriously threaten our troops during an offensive in the Berlin direction.

I don't remember exactly, on November 1 or 2, me and A.I. Antonov was summoned by the Supreme Commander to review the plan for winter operations. The project was reported by A.I. Antonov, after agreeing it with me in advance. And again, the Supreme Commander did not consider it necessary to agree to our general proposal to reinforce the 2nd Belorussian Front with one more army to defeat the East Prussian grouping. We proposed to take this army at the expense of the Baltic fronts, which, in our opinion, should go on the defensive by blocking the 16th and 18th armies of the enemy's Courland group.

After the November holidays, together with the General Staff, we began to develop a detailed plan for the offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. By this time, the command and headquarters of the front had already submitted to the General Staff their main considerations for conducting the operation, which basically corresponded to the situation ... "

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As is clear from archival documents, by November 10, the commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front also presented his views. Marshal I.S. tells how the plan was considered in the Kremlin. Konev in

book "Forty-five".

"At the end of November, I was called to Moscow with an operation plan developed by the front command. I reported him to the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I.V. Stalin in the presence of members of the State Defense Committee. I remember well how thoroughly I.V. Stalin studied this plan. He examined the Silesian industrial region on the map with particular attention. There was a huge cluster of enterprises, mines with powerful equipment located on the ground, various types of industrial buildings. All this, taken together, presented very big obstacles to the maneuvering actions of troops during the offensive. Even on the map, the scale of the Silesian region and its power looked impressive. Stalin, as I perfectly understood, emphasizing this circumstance, pointed his finger at the map, circled the area and said:

- Gold.

It was said in such a way that, in essence, did not require further comment.

For me, as a commander of the front, it was already clear without that that the question of the liberation of the Dombrowsko-Silesian industrial region had to be resolved in a special way. It was necessary to take all measures for the maximum possible preservation of its industrial potential, especially since after the liberation these primordially Polish lands should go to Poland, and therefore, according to our plan, the strikes of the troops went around this area, to the north and south of it. However, I will not hide that when Stalin said so emphatically, significantly: "Gold", I thought that I should study even more carefully and deeply all the possibilities not only for the liberation, but also for the salvation of the Dębrowo-Silesian industrial region ...

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... The plan from the Headquarters met no objections and was fully approved. Wasting no time, I returned to the front. Preparations for the operation have begun.

In the period from November 25 to December 3, 1944, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command issued directives to the fronts for the preparation of offensive operations, determining, according to the plan, that at the first stage of hostilities, the Soviet Armed Forces were to defeat the enemy in East Prussia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia with simultaneous strikes. , Hungary, Austria and reach the line of the mouth of the Vistula River, Bydgoszcz, (Brombsog), Poznan, Breslau, Bono, Vienna. The plan for the first stage was developed in the most detailed way. At the second stage, it was meant to occupy Berlin, liberate Prague, unite with the Allies and end the war in Europe victoriously. Specific tasks

fronts were supposed to be set depending on the situation. It was planned to concentrate the main efforts on the central direction, which made it possible to defeat significant enemy forces, complete the liberation of Poland, and withdraw Soviet troops by the shortest route to the central regions of Germany and its capital. The developed network of communication routes made it possible to deploy large masses of troops and military equipment here, to carry out wide maneuvers along the front and in depth.

The 1st Belorussian Front was ordered to deliver the main blow from Magnushevsky. the bridgehead in the direction of Poznan, Kustrin, tank armies were ordered to use after breaking through the defenses in the main direction in order to cut off the Warsaw enemy grouping of the escape route to the west. At the same time, the front was supposed to strike a second blow with the forces of two armies, two tank and one cavalry corps from the Pulawy bridgehead in the direction of Radom-Lodz, and part of the forces - on Kielce, advancing towards the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, then in interaction with them to defeat the Kielce-Radom grouping of the enemy. To break through the defenses in this sector, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the involvement of two artillery divisions,

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by creating an artillery density of at least 215 guns and mortars per kilometer of front. In addition, it was planned to deliver an auxiliary strike from the area north of Warsaw by the forces of the right-flank army, which, in cooperation with the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front, was to clear the Vistula-Western Bug interfluve from the enemy and further bypass Warsaw from the northwest. The 1st Army of the Polish Army was supposed to be used to liberate Warsaw.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

From the history of the creation of the 1st Polish Army

On August 14, 1941, a Soviet-Polish military agreement was concluded in Moscow, according to which the Government of the USSR agreed to create Polish military formations on the territory of the Soviet Union, intended for "moving to the front upon reaching full combat readiness." The Polish government in exile appointed General of Division W. Anders as commander of the army.

At the beginning of 1942, 6 infantry divisions and special units were deployed on the territory of the USSR, with a total number of more than 79 thousand people. The Polish government in exile, however, refused to use its troops on the Soviet-German front and, with the help of England, achieved evacuation during the period from March

ta to August 1942 Anders' army to the Middle East.

After the withdrawal of Anders' army to Iran, the Union of Polish Patriots turned to the Soviet government with a request to allow the formation of Polish military units on the territory and with the help of the USSR. On May 6, 1943, the GKO adopted a resolution on the formation of the 1st Polish Infantry Division. Tadeusz Kosciuszko, under the command of Colonel S. Berling, on October 12-13 near Lenino (Mogilev region), acting as part of the 33rd Army, she fought her first battle.

By mid-March 1944, the 1st Polish Army Corps was formed with a strength of 43.5 thousand G.K. Zhukov at the command post man. At its base in June on

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the formation of the 1st Polish army, tank, in September - a mixed aviation corps began. On July 20, 1944, the army included 4 infantry divisions, a cavalry brigade, a tank brigade, 2 heavy artillery brigades, 2 howitzer brigades, an anti-tank brigade, an anti-aircraft artillery division, a mortar regiment, an engineering sapper brigade and other army units. The combat and personnel of the army consisted of 100,777 people, 1,514 guns and mortars, 182 tanks and self-propelled guns.

Lieutenant General S.G. became the commander of the 1st Army. Poplavsky. On July 21, 1944, the Provisional Polish Government issued an order to create a single Polish Army. Its core was the 1st Polish Army. General of Armor M. Rola Zhymersky was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, General of Division S. Berling and General A. Zavadsky were appointed his deputies.

The Supreme Command Headquarters ordered the 1st Ukrainian Front to crush the enemy's Kielce-Radom grouping in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front and then develop an offensive in the direction of Breslavl (Breslau). It was planned to strike the main blow with the forces of five combined arms and two tank armies, four separate tank and mechanized corps from the Sandomierz bridgehead in the direction of Kielce. The troops of the front had to break through the enemy defenses in the center of the bridgehead with the forces of three armies, for which it was necessary to additionally attract six artillery divisions and create an artillery density of no

less than 220 guns and mortars per kilometer of front. In the second echelon, it was ordered to allocate two general army armies to use them after breaking through the enemy's defenses: one easel corps - with the task of bypassing the enemy's Ostrovets grouping from the west and helping the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front to reach the Radom area, the other - to build up the attack ra in the main direction. Tank armies were intended to build on success after breaking through the defenses in the main direction.

The 4th Ukrainian Front was ordered to prepare the right flank 38th Army for an offensive in the Krakow direction, in order to mutually

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action with the 1st Ukrainian Front to liberate Krakov. The troops located on the left wing and in the center of the front had the task of continuing the offensive on the territory of Czechoslovakia.

Thus, the idea of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. consisted in delivering dissecting blows by the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts from the Vistula bridgeheads, should have led to the fragmentation of the strategic front of the Wehrmacht, the defeat of the opposing enemy grouping with an advancing exit to the Oder (Odra) River.

The Supreme Commander-in-Chief took upon himself the coordination of the actions of the fronts. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command determined the beginning of the offensive for January 15-20.

After receiving the directives, the commanders of the troops of the fronts decided to conduct the operation and began its comprehensive preparation.

The commander of the 1st Belorussian Front was Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov, a member of the Military Council - Lieutenant General K.F. Telegin, chief of staff - Colonel General M.S. Malinin. The front commander decided to break through the enemy defenses in three sectors: from the Magnushevsky and Puławy bridgeheads and from the areas of northern Warsaw. According to the decision, the main blow was delivered from the Magnushevsky parade ground by four combined arms, two tank armies and a cavalry corps. The 61st, 5th shock and 8th guards operated in the first operational echelon. They were commanded by Colonel-General P.A. Belov, Lieutenant General N.E. Berzarin and Colonel General V.I. Chuikov. The mobile front group consisted of

the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies
(commanded by P.A. Belov,
Colonel General Tan

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military troops M.E. Katukov and S.I. Bogdanov), as well as the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps under the command of Lieutenant General V.V. Kryukov. It was planned to use the 3rd Shock Army (commanded by Lieutenant General N.P. Simonyak), which constituted the reserve of the front, in this direction.

The main blow was supposed to be delivered from the Magnuszew bridgehead in the direction of Kutno, Poznan. The 61st, 5th shock and 8th guards armies were supposed to break through the defenses here on a 17-kilometer sector, ensure the entry of tank armies into battle, and by the 12th day of the offensive reach the line 30 km northeast of Kutno, Zhikhlin. It was planned to bring the 1st Guards Tank Army into battle on the second, and the 2nd Guards Tank Army and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps on the third day of the operation. They were intended to develop success in the main direction. Ensuring the introduction of tank armies was assigned to the 8th Guards, 5th Shock and 16th Air Armies. Alya building up the efforts of the main grouping of the front, the 3rd shock army was intended.

The second blow was planned to be delivered from the Pulawski parade ground in the direction of Radom, Lodz. The 69th and 33rd armies, reinforced respectively by the 11th and 9th tank corps, broke through the enemy defenses in a sector of 13 km. On the 12th day of the operation, the 69th Army was to capture the city of Lodz. The main forces of the 33rd Army, after it reached the Wierzhbits area, were intended to advance on Shidlovets and defeat the Ostrovets-Opatovskaya enemy group in cooperation with the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front. To develop the offensive of the 69th and 33rd armies, in addition to the tank corps, on the third day of the operation, it was planned to bring into battle the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps - the reserve of the front.

The destruction of the Warsaw enemy grouping was assigned to three combined arms and one tank armies. The 47th Army received the task of going on the offensive on the second day of the operation, breaking through the enemy defenses

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Political worker's conversation

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on a 4-kilometer section north of Warsaw, liquidate its bridgehead in the interfluvium of the Vistula and the Western Bug, force the Vistula southeast of Modlin and develop an offensive against Leszno, bypassing the capital of Poland from the northwest. The troops of the 61st Army, advancing from the Magnushevsky bridgehead in the direction of Blonie, and the 2nd Guards Tank Army, which were operating on Sokhachev, bypassed Warsaw from the southwest and west. The task of directly liberating Warsaw, at the request of the Provisional Government of Poland, was entrusted to the 1st Army of the Polish Army. By decision of the front commander, it went over to the offensive with the main forces on the fourth day of the operation. By this time, it was already possible to determine the results of the offensive north and south of Warsaw, which greatly facilitated the task of liberating the capital with the least losses. Using the success of the 61st Army, the 1st Army of the Polish Army was to transfer its main forces to the left bank of the Vistula, develop an offensive along the river to the north, in cooperation with the 43rd and 61st armies, destroy the Warsaw enemy grouping and liberate Warsaw. With the rest of the forces (two divisions), she continued to defend the line on the right bank of the Vistula. As the main forces of the 1st Army of the Polish Army advanced, these divisions were to cross the river and advance on Warsaw.

The front had a deeply echeloned operational formation: the first echelon, the front mobile group, the second echelon, and the reserve, which made it possible to build up efforts in the course of combat operations. The concentration of the main forces and resources on the Magnushevsky and Pulawy bridgeheads (seven armies out of nine) to a certain extent guaranteed success in breaking through the enemy defenses.

"In his calculations," noted Marshal G.K. Zhukov, - we proceeded from the fact that we would have to fight with an experienced, stubborn and strong opponent, whom we already knew well.

In organizing the breakthrough of the defense, much thought was given to how to plan artillery and air preparation in order to break through the defense to its full tactical depth, and to bring mobile troops into the breach as quickly as possible, on which the main stake was placed.

In the process of preparing the operation, many disinformation measures were carried out in order to hide the scale of the upcoming offensive and the direction of attacks, especially the main attack. We tried to give the enemy the impression that troops were being concentrated against Warsaw. However, we did not have complete confidence that the enemy would be deceived and

did not understand our true measurements. We feared that, having guessed Naita's preparations, he would withdraw his main forces from the first position into the depths in order to force us to fire hundreds of thousands of shells at empty places.

After a comprehensive analysis of the situation and a discussion of all the pros and cons with the commanders and heads of the military branches, it was decided immediately before the general attack to conduct a strong combat reconnaissance, supporting it with a powerful thirty-minute artillery fire. To attack the front line, one or two rifle battalions with tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts were allocated from each division. Reconnaissance in force, apart from artillery, was supported by air strikes.

I.S. Konev

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On November 25, 1944, the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front received a directive from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to conduct the Sandomierz-Silesian offensive operation. Having understood the task received, the commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev (a member of the military council, Lieutenant General K.V. Krainyukov, chief of staff, General of the Army V.D. Sokolovsky) decided, advancing from the Sandomierz bridgehead in the 250 km zone, to break through the enemy defenses in the 39 km sector (Rakow, Metel), inflicting the main blow in the general direction on Radansko with the aim of defeating the Kielce-Radom grouping of the enemy in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian Front and capturing the Plotkow, Radomsko, Czestochowa, Zawiercie, Miechow, Bochnia line, and further develop the offensive in the general direction of Breslau .

"By the beginning of the operation," recalled I.S. Konev, - the front included eight combined arms armies: the 5th Guards Colonel General A.S. Zhadov, 21st Colonel General D.N. Gusev, 52nd General-Pol-

Kovnik K.A. Koroteev, 60th Colonel General P.A. Kurochkin, 13th Colonel General N.P. Pukhov, 59th Lieutenant General I.T. Korovnikova, 3rd Guards Colonel General V.N. Gordov, 6th Lieutenant General V.A. Gluzdovsky; two tank armies: 3rd Guards Colonel General P.S. Rybalko and 4th General Colonel D.D. Lelyushenko; 2nd Air Army Colonel General S.A. Krasovskogo. Finally, we had the 4th, 7th, 31st and 25th separate tank and mechanized corps, the commanders were Lieutenant General P.P. Poluboyarov, Major General S.A. Ivanov, G.G. Kuznetsov, E.I. Fominykh, P.A. Kurochkin

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1st Cavalry Corps under the command of Lieutenant General V.K. Baranov, breakthrough artillery corps, several breakthrough artillery divisions and a number of other formations that are difficult to list here... When preparing the operation, we tried to creatively comprehend the experience gained on the battlefields. We really wanted not to repeat the mistakes that we remembered, and to achieve success at the cost of a little blood. This was also very important because in previous operations, to tell the truth, there were many cases when the enemy's defense was breached with great difficulty and with great losses. The main reason for this is the slow pace of offensive operations. In a word, everything that was so fresh in our memory, both good and bad, we analyzed and took into account.

Realizing the difficulty of breaking through the enemy's defense and actions in the operational depth, the front, according to the decision of I.S. Konev had a formation in depth. In the first echelon were the 63rd Guards, 13th, 52nd, 5th Guards, 60th Armies, in the second - the 21st and 59th Armies, in the reserve - the 7th Guards. mechanized and 1st Guards. cavalry corps. The mobile front group included the 3rd Guards. and 4th tank armies. The tasks for the armies were completed by extracts from the operational directive of the front of December 23, 1944.

The 4th Panzer Army was to enter the gap in the sector of the 13th Army, rapidly advance in a northwestern direction to Rozpsza, destroy the retreating units and reserves of the enemy, enter the retreat path of the Kielce-Radom grouping, in order to subsequently connect with the troops of 1 th Belorussian Front in the Lodz region. 3rd Guards Tank Army

received the task of entering the gap in the sector of the 52nd army and, developing success in the direction of Radomsko, defeat the retreating units and reserves of the enemy, preventing them from occupying the prepared lines on the Nida and Pilica rivers. The right flank of the shock group of the front was provided by the 6th and 3rd Guards armies advancing on Shid

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N.T. Kalchenko and D.D. Lelyushenko

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catcher. Ensuring the left flank of the shock group of the front was assigned to the 60th Army and the 59th Army of the second echelon. They were to advance along the left bank of the Vistula and, in cooperation with the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front, liberate Krakow.

It was planned to use the 2nd Air Army to cover the concentration of the main forces of the front on the Sando Mirsky bridgehead, to support troops in breaking through enemy defenses and to develop the success of tank armies and armies of the second echelon, to cover their crossings on the Vistula, and strike at crossings against the nickname on the rivers Nida and Pilica, as well as to destroy enemy aircraft at the airfields of the Krakow and Endzheyuvsky air hubs.

4th Ukrainian Front, where the commander was General of the Army I.E. Petrov, a member of the Military Council - Colonel General L.3. Mekhlis, chief of staff - Lieutenant General F.K. Korzhenevich, according to the instructions of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, allocated the 38th Army for participation in the Vistula-Oder operation (commander Colonel General K.S. Moskalenko, member of the Military Council Major General A.A. Epishev, Chief of Staff Lieutenant General V.F. Vorobyov).

It was supposed to strike from the area south of Jaslo in the general direction to Bielsko-Biala and with part of its forces to Krakow, defeat the enemy and, in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, liberate Krakow.

K.S. Moskalenko

Combined-arms armies with tank units attached to them, according to the plan of the commander of the front, were supposed to break through the main defensive polo

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su the enemy, and tank armies to rapidly develop a breakthrough, not allowing the enemy to gain a foothold on intermediate rear defensive lines. The forces allocated to the first echelon, their technical equipment, and powerful artillery support for a breakthrough gave reason to expect that the troops of the first echelon would cope with their tasks and provide mobile formations with a swift exit to the enemy's rear lines of defense before he was able to occupy them. reserves. Based on this calculation, a plan was built for the entire subsequent development of the operation.

However, a number of unforeseen circumstances during the critical period of completion of the breakthrough could lead to a slowdown in the rate of advance of troops, which would give the enemy the opportunity, after recovering from the first blow, to organize a rebuff at the very first rear line. To prevent this, the commander of the front forces provided for the possibility of using tank armies to complete the breakthrough of the main German defensive line in the event that the combined arms armies for some reason failed to quickly make a breakthrough. The meaning of this measure was to win time to the greatest extent, to prevent the enemy from occupying the rear defensive lines with his retreating troops or reserves, and thereby to maintain a high rate of advance throughout the entire operation.

To build up the strike of the main strike force during combat in the operational depth of the enemy defense, the 21st Army was intended, which in the operational formation of the front, in fact, constituted the third echelon (the second echelon or the so-called success development echelon - tank armies). Operational support for the flanks of the main strike force was assigned: on the right wing of the front to the 3rd Guards and 6th armies, on the left - to the 60th and 59th armies.

In the direction of the main attack, the 13th Army was supposed to break through the enemy defenses in the Rakow, Szydłów sector with a length of 11 km, deliver the main blow

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the center of the army in the general direction: Rudki, Pezhkhmitsa. The development of the offensive in the operational depth was to take place in close cooperation with

4th Panzer Army, introduced into the gap in the army sector. The rapid advance of combined arms and tank formations was supposed to frustrate a possible attempt by the enemy to organize defense at the lines prepared in advance along the rivers Charna Nida and Pilica. Fulfilling its main task, the army at the same time had to assist the 3rd Guards Army in capturing the city of Kielce as part of the forces with a strike from the west. By the end of the third day of the operation, the front of the army was to pass along the line Oblengur, Malogoshch.

The 4th Panzer Army, having entered the gap, was to rapidly develop the offensive in the direction of Pezhkhnitz with the task of destroying the retreating enemy and his suitable reserves and entering the retreat path of the Kielce-Radom group of Germans. Having mastered by the end of the second day of the operation the border of the river. Charna Nida, the army was supposed to assist units of the 13th and 3rd Guards armies in capturing Kielce with a strike from the northwest. By the end of the third day of the operation, it was planned to leave the army in the area of Radoshitse, Chermno, Mnin. By this time, its forward detachments were to seize the crossings across the river. Pilica. The next task of the army was the exit of the main forces to the area of Piotrkow, Rozpsza, Gozhkovitsy. In the course of the pursuit, the side and reconnaissance detachments were to capture the junctions of the Voluv, Konskie, and Zharnuv roads.

The 3rd Guards Tank Army was also introduced in the direction of the main attack in the battle. The 5th Guards Army also operated here. It was supposed to step up efforts after breaking through the defense zone by bringing the 21st Army into battle. The use of the front reserve, the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, was not ruled out.

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Delivery of ammunition to the front line

In order to defeat the Kielce-Radom grouping of the enemy and reliably ensure the actions of the main strike group on the right, the commander of the 3rd Guards Army was ordered to bring the army from behind the right flank of the 13th and strike with the main forces (six rifle divisions and the 25th tank corps) in the direction of Rakow, Dalence, bypassing the enemy's Ostrov defense system from the west. Subsequently, in cooperation with the right-flank formations of the 13th Army, striking at Kielce from the south, it was supposed to cut off the Kielce enemy grouping, launching an offensive on Shidlovets.

The main task of the 6th Army was a tough defense, especially in the sector of the Sandomierz bridgehead. With the development of the operation, it was entrusted with the task of pursuing the retreating enemy and, together with the 3rd Guards Army, destroying the Ostrovets-Opatovskaya group of Germans.

To ensure the operation of the front from the south, the 60th Army received the task, using a breakthrough on the left flank of the 5th Guards Army, with a grouping of five divisions

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ziy to develop an offensive in the direction of Krakow with the immediate task of destroying the enemy on the northern bank of the river. Vistula; in the future, hiding behind the river. Vistula with two divisions, three divisions to continue the offensive in the direction of Kazimierz Wielka. Subsequently, in cooperation with the 59th Army, she was to capture the city of Krakow.

The 59th Army, being in the second echelon, received the task of being ready to enter the battle from the turn of the river. Nida and from here to develop the offensive in the general direction of Dzialoshitse, Miechuv with the task of securing the main grouping of the front from the southwest. With one rifle and 4th guards tank corps, the army was to bypass Krakow from the north and northwest and, in cooperation with the 60th army, capture the city. In accordance with the plan of the commander of the front, 1: which the decisive role in the operation was assigned to the armies of the center, the means of support - artillery, tank, aviation, engineering, communications - were also mainly concentrated in the sectors of these armies. The main artillery assets of the high command reserve were concentrated in the offensive zones of the 13th, 52nd, and 5th Guards Armies. In addition, the artillery of neighboring armies and armies of the second echelon was involved in ensuring the operations of the main strike force in the first period of the artillery offensive.

The idea of concentration of forces can also be traced in relation to formations of armored and mechanized troops. Thus, the 13th Army was reinforced with a separate tank brigade, three separate tank regiments, four self-propelled artillery regiments, the 3rd Guards Army with a tank corps, a separate tank regiment and two self-propelled artillery regiments, the 5th Guards Army with two tank regiments. corps, two separate tank regiments, a self-propelled artillery brigade, the 52nd Army - a separate tank brigade, three separate tank regiments and nine separate self-propelled artillery

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divisions, the 59th Army - one separate tank regiment and three self-propelled artillery regiments, the 60th Army - three self-propelled artillery regiments. The 6th and 21st armies had no reinforcements. As a result, all 3,618 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts were intended for use on a front of 39 km, that is, where the army of the center and the attack groups of the 3rd Guards and 60th Army attacked from the flanks struck.

The concentration of tanks and self-propelled guns in the direction of the main attack and their separation allowed Marshal I.S. Konev to have a strong tank echelon of breakthrough, a powerful tank echelon (two tank armies) for the development of success, and a reliable tank reserve (7th Guards Mechanized Corps), capable of exerting a significant influence on the situation when solving suddenly arising tasks.

Thus, the adoption by the commanders of the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts of decisions fully corresponded to the plan of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command for the Vistula-Oder operation and the tasks set by the front. They corresponded to the situation that had developed in the zone of each of the fronts, the nature of the enemy's defense, the conditions of the terrain, the availability of available forces and means, based on the basic principles of Soviet military art. Based on the decisions made and the tasks assigned to subordinates, the stage of preparing troops for the upcoming military operations began.

Chapter 4

PREPARATION OF THE SOVIET TROOPS FOR THE UPCOMING BATTLE

Preparations for the Vistula-Oder operation included a set of measures carried out by commanders, headquarters and other command and control bodies. The main ones were: the implementation of regroupings and the creation of strike groupings of troops, the planning of upcoming military operations in armies, formations and units, the organization of fire engagement of the enemy, combat training of personnel, reconnaissance, all types of support, interaction and stable command and control of troops.

On the 1st Belorussian Front, the difficulties of regrouping were due to two important circumstances. The first is their scale. The second is the limited size of the areas for deploying troops on the bridgeheads. The following figures testify to the scale of the regroupings: the 61st, 33rd, 3rd and 5th shock armies, the 14th and 29th artillery divisions,

up to 20 battalions of tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts, more than 40 marching companies. The bridgeheads from which the main blows of the troops were launched had the following dimensions: Magnushevsky - 44 km along the front and 15 km in depth, Pulavsky - 30 km along the front and 10 km in depth.

The success of the rearrangements was ensured by their nutritional organization, comprehensive support, reliable air cover, and camouflage. front headquarters

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that and the armies carried out reconnaissance, air defense. On the routes of movement, in the areas of collection, concentration and location, a commandant's service was organized. Its main tasks were: regulating the movement of troops, monitoring their compliance with the established order and camouflage measures, collecting and sending retired personnel, military equipment and vehicles to their units, combating sabotage reconnaissance groups and enemy agents, and guarding routes. The orders for the commandant's service developed at the headquarters usually indicated: where, when and with what tasks the commandant's service was organized, what should be paid special attention to, the appointed commandants of routes (sections and regions), traffic control posts and checkpoints, the procedure maintaining communication.

In order to control the secrecy of the concentration of troops from the front, it was ordered to conduct aerial reconnaissance of their movement along the routes and in the areas of concentration. This task was carried out mainly on Po-2 aircraft. The reconnaissance was led by a staff officer who personally flew on a mission and controlled the actions of the crews. Each crew was given a strip for reconnaissance, and during the day they looked through it from the air two or three times. Reconnaissance was carried out from heights similar to those at which enemy aircraft conducted reconnaissance. The crews carefully looked through the given bands and everything that was found was presented in a report to the front headquarters. Such an event, along with the intensification of the struggle against enemy scouts during this period, led to the fact that the main grouping of ground troops was concentrated in given areas and was not opened by the enemy from the air.

As a result of successful regroupings, a significant superiority in forces and means over the enemy was achieved, as evidenced by the data reflected in tables 5 and 6. High densities of fire weapons were created mainly in order to subject the first echelon to

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the falling enemy to a crushing defeat and thereby prevent him from withdrawing his troops and organizing defense on the lines prepared in depth. As noted by the Chief of Staff of the 1st Belorussian Front, General M.S. Malinin, we tried to create such a strike force that would be able to overcome the entire zone of the enemy's tactical defense, then quickly make an operational breakthrough so that we could capture the lines before the enemy, using the forces of retreating units and arriving reserves from the depth, organizes on them defense. The formation of troops and the planned nature of hostilities were subordinated to the same goal.

Much attention was paid to the engineering

preparation of the initial area for an offensive in order to ensure the concealed disposition of troops, their protection from ground and air enemies, deployment and transition to the offensive. The engineering preparation of the starting area included engineering reconnaissance of the area, checking and demining areas occupied by the troops, carrying out additional equipment of field fortifications, preparing and maintaining routes for the advancement and deployment of troops, supply and evacuation, engineering camouflage measures. The most complex tasks were solved by the engineering units, the rest of the work was carried out by the troops occupying the initial area. The number of engineering units that the armies of the 1st Belorussian Front had on the eve of the operation to solve the tasks noted, the amount of work performed by the engineering units and troops, is evidenced by the data in Table 7.

An important component of the preparation of the operation was the creation of artillery groups and echelons of tanks in direct infantry support (NPP). These issues were resolved under the leadership of General Vasily Ivanovich Kozlov, commander of the artillery of the front, and General Grigory Nikolaevich Orel, commander of the armored and mechanized troops of the front.

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Table 7

NUMBER OF ENGINEERING UNITS IN ARMIES
1st BELARUSIAN FRONT AND THE VOLUME OF COMPLETED WORK
IN PREPARATION OF THE INITIAL AREA
ON THE EVE OF THE VISLA-ODER OPERATION

1. Engineering units of the armies (including those who arrived for reinforcement):

Name | Engineering | Assault | Pontoon- Military Combat Sappers | engineering
| nye bata- | construction battalions sapper lions detachments battalions | 47th Army
6 - 2

1st Army Voi- 9 - 1 ==

'ska Polsky

61st Army 6 2 2 —

5th shock 6 3 2 —

army

8th Guards army 4 E 22 2

69th Army 7 _ - 2

33rd Army 4 — —_ yy

3rd shock 4 = = -

army

2. The number of structures erected by engineering units:

Trenches Dugouts Trenches Trenches knp (np) tunnels
and trenches for guns | for machine gun posts and
mortars | Comrade RPTR. 1064 10 446 6575 17
798 2956 9.6 106 74 182 28

Note. The numerator is the length (km) or the total number of structures, the denominator is the maximum density per 1 km of Magnushevsko

Go and Puřawski bridgeheads.

3. Scope of work:

Nature of work Length. Quantity. Roads built 129.3 km -
Bridges built 10,229 m 26 Min set |
319 892 'Passages made | 2042 Removed
mines | 93 046

86

Both generals by this time had extensive experience gained in previous operations and battles. By the way, they were the same age (in the summer of 1944 they turned 46 years old), almost simultaneously graduated from the Military Academy named after M.V. Frunze, in the army since July 1941, participated in the battle near Moscow, then there were Kursk, the Belorussian operation.

The tasks of the army artillery breakthrough groups were to, together with the artillery of the army, break through the enemy's fortified zone, destroy and suppress large strongholds and especially strong structures, as well as destroy neck trenches and suppress manpower in them and in communication channels and, finally, part of the forces to accompany the infantry with fire

shaft.

The tasks of the army long-range artillery groups (ADD) were to conduct counter-battery combat during the entire period of breakthrough and development of success in the depths of the enemy's defensive zone, to provide flanks and joints between armies and rifle corps, to fight enemy reserves in areas of their concentration and on the approaches, in providing massed fire to combat operations of rifle corps, in suppressing headquarters and communication centers, destroying warehouses, crossings and preventing the withdrawal of enemy columns, ensuring the entry of tank and mechanized units into battle.

The corps artillery group (KAG) consisted of separate artillery brigades, brigades of artillery divisions, artillery regiments and regiments of guards mortar units (GMCh). It included 70-80 guns and an M-13 regiment.

The divisional artillery group (DAG) was composed of attached units and formations of artillery of the RGK. In some cases, the RS regiment was included in this group. Divisional groups had 24-36 guns.

The regimental artillery group (PAG), as a group of direct infantry support, was staffed from mortar fields attached to rifle divisions.

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kov and other artillery means of the RGK, as well as from artillery regiments of the second echelons. In total, these groups numbered 36-40 guns. In the rifle battalions, the direct infantry support subgroup had 24-36 guns.

To break through the enemy defenses from the Magnushevsky bridgehead, the NPP tank groups were allocated: a heavy tank and a separate tank brigade, three heavy breakthrough tank regiments, six tank regiments, three heavy and nine light self-propelled regiments, nine separate self-propelled artillery battalions. All these formations and units included 312 tanks and 397 self-propelled artillery mounts.

For the formation of tank groups for direct infantry support advancing from the Puřawy bridgehead, a separate tank and self-propelled artillery brigades, a heavy breakthrough tank regiment, two linear tank, three heavy and three light self-propelled artillery regiments, nine self-propelled artillery battalions were intended. The NPP tank grouping consisted of 144 tanks and 293 self-propelled artillery mounts.

As statistics show, the army, acting

from the bridgeheads, had from 199 to 264 tanks (IS, T-34, T-70, M4A2, MK) and self-propelled artillery mounts (ISU-152, ISU-122, SU-76). The density per 1 km of the breakthrough front ranged from 15 (in the 61st Army) to 29 (in the 5th Shock Army) units. Of all the offensive operations carried out by the Soviet troops in 1944-1945, such densities were achieved in individual armies only in the Belorussian and Berlin operations.

When organizing fire engagement of the enemy, great hopes were placed on the 16th Air Army, commanded by Lieutenant General of Aviation Sergei Ignatievich Rudenko. He was born in 1904, just recently celebrated his fortieth birthday. Passed the way from the aviation division, the commander of the Air Force of a number of fronts that took part in Kalinin

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Moscow, Leningrad - New City operations, the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, in the Belarusian operation.

At the end of November, the combat strength of the 16th Air Army had 1,275 aircraft, of which: 83 night bombers, 192 day bombers, 300 attack aircraft, 637 fighters, and 63 reconnaissance aircraft. army was increased to 2290. She S.I. Rudenko had 174 night bombers, 329 day bombers, 695 attack aircraft, 998 fighters, 94 scouts and spotters. Provided that the number of enemy aircraft at the beginning of the operation was 650 units, the balance of forces was 3.5: 1 in favor of the Air Force 1- th Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, which made it possible to solve the main task - to maintain air supremacy, to provide maximum fire damage to the enemy during the operation, to ensure the introduction of a tank army into battle, to support reliable troops both in breaking through the enemy's defenses and in their action in operational depth.

To fight for air supremacy over the battlefield, 3 aviation fighter divisions were assigned.

The 3rd bomber aviation corps remained in the reserve of the commander of the 16th air army. It was mainly intended to strengthen certain areas. Aviation actions were planned for the first

the first two days of the operation. In the corresponding plan, the goals and tasks of aviation formations and units in the interests of ground forces were formulated. The main efforts of aviation were concentrated in the zone of the armies operating in the main direction.

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Prior to the introduction of mobile groups into the gap, aviation control was centralized. With the introduction of mobile groups into the breakthrough, part of the assault and fighter aviation formations was transferred to the operational subordination of the commanders of tank armies and corps commanders. The plan for the use of aviation for this period of the operation was drawn up for four days, with the first two days assigned to cover the concentration of mobile groups, and the next two days to bring them into the breakthrough and operate in depth.

The headquarters of the 16th Air Army planned the missions of aviation formations on the days of the operation and determined the timing of their transfer to the operational subordination of the commanders of the combined arms armies and mobile groups. Following the ground forces were to follow: the 3rd bomber aviation corps, the 1st guards fighter aviation division interacting with it and the 242nd night bomber aviation division.

In preparation for the Vistula-Oder operation, the command of the front's troops made air reconnaissance as one of the most important tasks in order to reveal the nature and system of the enemy's defense to the full tactical depth; establish the presence, nature and degree of preparation of intermediate and rear defensive lines from the Vistula to Poznan; open the grouping of field and anti-aircraft artillery, especially in the areas of bridgeheads; establish areas for the concentration of enemy reserves, primarily tanks; open the entire airfield network of the enemy; establish the grouping and number of aviation; conduct continuous monitoring of the main communications; determine whether the first enemy trenches are occupied.

Despite the poor meteorological conditions of the preparatory period of the operation (in November there were only two flying days, in December - six, in the first half of January - one), the reconnaissance tasks were completed. During the specified period, 1759 sorties were made for reconnaissance purposes, which is 47%

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the total number of flights flown. An aerial photograph of an area of 109,200 km² was made. Pla-

a new photographic survey of the front line of the enemy defense to a depth of 4-8 km was made three times, a survey of the enemy defense against the Magnushevsky bridgehead to a depth of 25 km and the Pulawy bridgehead to a depth of 40 km was made four times.

In addition, perspective photography of the front line of the enemy's defense against the Magnushevsky bridgehead was made seven times, and against the Puławy bridgehead twice. At the same time, the operational depth of the enemy's defense was photographed in order to open intermediate and rear defensive lines. As a result of this, enemy defensive positions were discovered, as well as all active airfields, and an aviation grouping was identified on them. In the interests of aviation, the crossings over the Vistula and Pilica and railway junctions were photographed, since it was envisaged that the destruction of these crossings and railway junctions would be entrusted to aviation.

The data received from aviation reconnaissance was supplemented by information received from engineering, artillery, combined arms reconnaissance, and agents operating behind enemy lines.

A detailed plan was required for bringing tank armies into battle, especially the 2nd Guards, which, according to the plan, was supposed to enter the so-called clean breakthrough, that is, after the combined arms armies had overcome the entire enemy defense zone in the zone of the 5th shock army, and strike a blow to the rear of the Warsaw grouping of the enemy. On the third day of the operation (the first day of entering the gap), it was to capture the Zhirardow, Moshchnuvu Sokhachev area. In case the Warsaw group offered stubborn resistance to the advancing 61st and 1st Polish armies, it was supposed to turn one or two corps to the east to strike at this grouping.

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In the foreground (left to right): sappers N.D. Kosht, S.D. Topolnik and S.I. Sleptsov is preparing a raft from improvised means

was to develop a blow to Koval. The army, having 824 armored units, entering the gap, was supposed to strike at a depth of 150 km. The average daily team was determined to be about 50 km. The army was built in two echelons, with the main forces (9th Guards Tank Corps and 1st Mechanized Corps) on the right flank. The first echelon consisted of two tank corps (9th and 12th guards), the second echelon - the 1st mechanized corps. All corps of the army advanced in two columns. The operational formation depth was over 67 km.

Ensuring the introduction of the 2nd Guards Tank Army into the breakthrough was assigned to the ADD group of the 5th Shock Army, the artillery group of the 26th Guards Rifle Corps, where the tank army was introduced; two divisional, four regimental artillery groups and three RS regiments (total 452-512 guns). The artillery of the tank army advanced in columns in readiness for deployment and fire support for the actions of the forward detachments.

For the period when the army entered the gap, the 6th assault and 6th fighter aviation corps and one fighter division of the 3rd aviation were operationally subordinated.

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demanding corps, and to accompany the actions of the army in depth - one assault and two fighter aviation divisions of the 16th air army. In order to effectively support the formations of the tank army, the commanders of aviation formations with operational groups (officer of the operational department of the headquarters of the corps or division, assistant chief of communications by radio, cryptographer) followed together with the commanders of mobile formations, exercising control of subordinate units from here. In addition, there were aircraft controllers in each tank (mechanized) brigade.

Engineering support for entering the breakthrough along four routes was assigned to the engineering troops of the 5th shock army. They performed the following tasks: reconnaissance and demining of all four routes; let parts of the tank army pass through their forward edge and the main defensive line of the enemy. The engineering troops of the tank army ensured the advancement of the corps from the initial area on the bridgehead to the line of overtaking the infantry along the routes prepared by the engineering units of the 5th shock army. They conducted reconnaissance and demining; carried out partial repairs of roads and the construction of small bridges across streams, ditches and trenches. The engineering units of the front were entrusted with the provision of crossings across the Pilica River, the construction of bridges for loads of 60 tons on two routes. The 29th motor-engineering battalion of the front was intended to act as a mobile barrier detachment and equipment for the army command post.

Commander of the Front Marshal G.K. Zhukov, in an order dated November 18, 1944, gave the main instructions on the combat training of troops for the upcoming offensive. In accordance with this order, the combat training of the troops of the front was planned for 40 days, starting from November 20, 1944. The length of the school day was set at 8 hours. In total, 320 training hours were allocated for combat training. Half of this time was devoted to tactical training. Other

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half was distributed at the discretion of the commanders of the armies and commanders of individual corps.

The main place in the combat training of the infantry, which was not in defensive positions, was occupied by tactical exercises. Their goal was to teach the infantry, with the assistance of other branches of the armed forces, to break through the positional defense of the enemy. Therefore, such topics of tactical training were worked out as "Attack by a reinforced rifle platoon of an enemy firing point"; "Offensive and attack by a reinforced rifle company of the enemy's stronghold and battle in the depths of defense"; "On the offensive and attack of a reinforced rifle battalion behind an artillery barrage, actions in the depths of defense and consolidation of captured positions"; "The offensive of the rifle regiment on the positional defense of the enemy, the interaction of the combat arms in the development of the battle in the depths of the defense and the reflection of the enemy's counterattacks." Divisional exercises with reinforcements and live fire were held on the topic "Breakthrough of the Enemy's Positional Defense".

As a rule, all these activities were bilateral or with a designated "opponent". They were carried out on training fields specially equipped in each regiment, corresponding to the terrain on which the troops were to fight, and the defense was built on the German type. In the training of the infantry, special attention was paid to developing the ability to move behind the barrage of fire, clinging to the explosions of their shells. All battalions at least once carried out an offensive behind a barrage of artillery and mortars firing live projectiles. Other requirements for infantry were: the ability to quickly overcome engineering obstacles, organize the defense of captured objects and lines, prepare for counterattacks, and pursue the retreating enemy.

In order to teach the infantry to interact with other branches of the military, rifle subunits, units and formations solved all tactical tasks together with those artillery, tank and aviation

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units with which they were to act in an offensive operation. In each regiment, a rifle battalion was allocated, specially trained to storm the enemy's defenses.

The combat training plan for the infantry defending the positions was divided into two halves. The first half

The fault of the plan provided for the preparation of troops to conduct a defensive battle and repulse attacks by enemy infantry and tanks; the second was devoted to working out those tactical topics that have already been mentioned. Training fields were set up for tactical exercises.

Infantry engineering training was carried out in conjunction with combined arms training. In the infantry, non-standard miners were trained, who at special training camps were trained in making passages in enemy barriers, demining and detecting enemy "surprises", covering artillery firing positions with minefields, mining the area for the immediate consolidation of captured lines, undermining wire barriers. Non-standard miners, along with weapons laid down by the type of troops, were equipped with scissors for cutting wire, probes for demining, explosive charges and incendiary tubes. In addition, one division of tank destroyers was trained in each rifle company.

As a result of the engineering training, soldiers and sergeants of rifle units and subunits developed skills in self-digging, overcoming explosive and other engineering barriers, forcing water barriers using improvised and service equipment, and securing captured positions. The issues of storming long-term structures and individual strongholds of the enemy, the interaction of sappers with units of all branches of the military that were part of the assault groups were practically worked out.

From December 8 to 10, at the headquarters of the 1st Belorussian Front under the leadership of the commander of the front

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that was an operational game on the cards. It involved: commanders of the armies, members of the military councils of the armies, chiefs of staff and commanders of the artillery of the armies. The game was played against the backdrop of a real operational situation and in the light of the decision taken by the front commander for the upcoming offensive operation. The purpose of the game was to work out the battle formations of armies for breaking through the enemy defenses, to determine the method of artillery offensive, to establish the procedure for introducing tank armies into the breakthrough, and to work out the issues of command and control in an offensive operation.

From December 12 to 20, the army commanders, in the presence of the front commander, played similar games with the commanders of rifle corps and divisions, tank and cavalry corps, and also with the commanders of air formations.

One full day a week was allotted for command training with officers. Classes were held on specially equipped mock-ups of the terrain, similar to the one on which our units were to operate. When training officers, special attention was paid to the organization of interaction before an attack and during an offensive. With the commanders of units and formations, classes were held on the following topics: "Breakthrough of the enemy's defense by a reinforced rifle regiment in depth"; "Management of a rifle regiment in an offensive battle"; "Pursuit of the retreating enemy, reflection of counterattacks, encirclement and destruction of the enemy."

On December 20-22, at the front headquarters under the leadership of the chief of staff of the front, Colonel-General M.S. Malinin, an operational staff game was held. Its purpose was to work out the issues of command and control in the forthcoming offensive operation. The game was attended by the chiefs of staff of the army and individual corps, the chiefs of operational and intelligence departments, the chiefs of communications and their deputies on the radio, as well as the chiefs of staff of artillery of the armies.

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After this game, the combined arms headquarters held their own games: the headquarters of the rifle divisions on the topic "The offensive of the reinforced rifle division on the positional defense of the enemy and the development of the battle in depth"; headquarters of rifle corps on the topic "Organization of a breakthrough in the positional defense of the enemy and actions in depth to develop a breakthrough"; army headquarters on the topic "Planning and organizing a breakthrough in the positional defense of the enemy and ensuring the introduction and breakthrough of mobile formations." The headquarters of the cavalry corps held classes on the topic "Introduction of the cavalry corps into the breakthrough and operations behind enemy lines in cooperation with aviation and tank formations."

At the headquarters exercises, which were led by the respective commanders of formations, the main attention was paid to the organization of combat, control and interaction of military branches. For this purpose, officers and generals of artillery, tank, aviation and engineering units and formations were involved in the exercises. With the headquarters of divisions and corps, two exercises were held each with access to the field with communications equipment. In those divisions where the situation did not allow for exercises with access to the field, they were carried out on maps or mock-ups.

In the last days of December, the head of the rear of the front, on the basis of the general plan of the offensive operation, held a meeting with the chiefs of the rear of the armies and the heads of the main departments and departments of the rear of the armies to prepare logistics

operation.

The work on training the personnel of the artillery units and formations of the front was carried out in two ways: through systematic combat training with all the personnel of the artillery units and officers of the artillery staffs with the development of the most poorly learned issues, as well as by holding special games with the commanders of the artillery of the armies, rifle corps and divisions, involving them in classes and exercises organized along the combined arms line.

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Gun crew: S.E. Babin (right) and his sons Ivan and Vladimir

In the order for the artillery of the front for December, the content and requirements for training were determined by the experience of the battles carried out by the troops of the front, the nature of the forthcoming operation, and the revealed shortcomings in the training of headquarters of units and formations. The main shortcoming in the training of the personnel of artillery units and headquarters was the lack of ability to specifically plan artillery fire, in particular, the inability to organize and conduct a barrage of fire and provide fire for moving mobile groups into a breakthrough. The senior officer corps had a poor command of the technique of controlling massive artillery fire. There was also a weak development of interaction, especially in the link company - battery, battalion - division. The order demanded to organize a systematic training of headquarters and, starting from the army artillery headquarters, to conduct a consistent development of two topics: "Artillery support for the introduction of mobile formations into the breakthrough", "Organization and conduct of a fire shaft (single and double)".

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It was proposed to work with the officers on the technique of conducting massive artillery fire and the organization of interaction with other branches of the military. The entire course of combat training was characterized by its approximation to combat reality, the organization of a large number of tactical exercises, live firing, carried out on the ground in cooperation with other branches of the military. The commander of the artillery of the front, General V.I. Kazakov personally held card games with generals and senior officers in all armies and corps. They worked out and refined the issues of interaction and artillery support of the operation.

The training of personnel, including command personnel, in formations, formations and units of armored and mechanized troops had a practical orientation. Under the constant control of General G.N. Orel and his staff were questions about training tankers in driving and operating military equipment, and their fire training. Particular attention was paid to working out the interaction of NPP tanks with infantry and artillery, coordinating the efforts of tank formations when they are brought into battle with the forces and means of infantry, artillery, engineering troops, as well as aviation. Ten days before going on the offensive, forward detachments began to form in the tank armies, most often as part of a tank brigade, a self-propelled artillery regiment, engineering and other support units. In all armies, meetings were held for officers of all levels to study the tactical and technical data of various artillery systems, tanks, military engineering equipment and to demonstrate military equipment in action. This allowed the commanding staff not only to realize the size of the technical equipment of the armies of the front and the qualitative capabilities of the combat equipment of the Red Army, but also, in the course of practical exercises with the troops, to familiarize the personnel with the force that will support them in the upcoming offensive.

research institutes

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In the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front in the preparatory period, as well as on the neighboring front, special attention was paid to conducting reconnaissance of the enemy, the operational concentration of troops, planning the use of available forces and means, preparing a bridgehead, including in terms of engineering, combat and political training of personnel, material support of the troops and preparation of the rear for the operation, organization of command and control.

All preparatory work was preceded by a large-scale regrouping, mainly from the depths to the Sandomierz bridgehead. By decision of the commander of the front, it was planned to regroup there from the eastern coast of the 52nd Army, the main forces of the 6th and 60th armies, formations of the 3rd Guards. and 4th tank armies, 25th, 4th and part of the forces of the 31st tank corps, 1st guards. cavalry corps, 1st and 17th artillery divisions to break through part of rocket artillery, withdraw the 1st tank army from the parade ground. As a result, the grouping on the bridgehead in terms of the number of forces and means was to increase by about 60-70 percent. Should

0 the feat of Peter Khlyustin was read by everyone who crossed the Vistula here

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take into account that the deployment of such a large number of troops on a relatively small bridgehead required the movement and consolidation of the troops already located there, that is, it was necessary to carry out the so-called intra-bridgehead regroupings.

The success of the regrouping at the first stage was facilitated by the rapid construction of bridges and ferry crossings. Already in November, 24 ferries were operating in the 13th Army's crossing zone, of which two were 50-60 tons and nine were 16 tons. Tanks of the 1st and 3rd Guards were transported on these ferries. tank armies. The regrouping of troops to the bridgehead during the period of direct preparation for the offensive proceeded quite rhythmically. By January 1, 1945, the front already had 17 bridges with a carrying capacity of 16 to 60 tons. 315 km of column tracks were built on the bridgehead.

The success of the regrouping during the period of direct preparation of the operation was facilitated by: clear planning and adherence to the schedule of movement, including when crossing the Vistula; providing troops with a sufficient number of crossing facilities (two

Y ^ AUGUST YX 1044 IN THE
FERIOUS BATTLE ON THE VISLENSKY BRIDGE
HEAD OF THE GUARD RED ARMENIAN
KOMSOMOLETs PETER KHLUSTIN,
SAVING THE CRITICAL SITUATION, C0 WITH A
BUNCH OF ANTI-TANK GRENADE, Rushed
UNDER THE GERMAN. .PANTER THE ATTACK
OF THE GERMANS WAS RESPONDED. AT THE
SITE OF THE DEATH OF THE HERO WAS ESTABLISHED
BATTLE RED BANNER AND EQUIPPED
COMMAND POST OF THE REGIMENT

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bridge per army, not counting ferry crossings); reliable cover for the regrouping from the air (anti-aircraft artillery groups were created in each division, and fighter aircraft made 16,735 sorties between January 1 and 11). A shortcoming in the organization of the regrouping must be considered the fact that in most of the regrouped armies the rear units and institutions were left on the eastern bank of the Vistula. Temporary supplies organized at the bridgehead at the expense of the material resources of other associations were not always sufficient.

The front commander and headquarters paid much attention to reconnaissance of the enemy. For this purpose, night searches, ambushes were widely used, round-the-clock

daily surveillance and eavesdropping. As a result, for the first time, for each battery commander and company commander, blank maps were made for the entire area of the future breakthrough with enemy engineering structures, a fire system and objects of attack applied to them. Artillery reconnaissance was carried out by the forces of eleven reconnaissance artillery battalions, of which eight were detached by army cannon artillery brigades, two by breakthrough artillery corps, and one by the front command. The reconnaissance of the engineering equipment of the German defense was carried out by all means of engineering reconnaissance and the study of data from combined arms, artillery and aviation reconnaissance. For a special study of the system of engineering structures and obstacles on the front line of the enemy's defense, engineering observation posts were organized. In the area of each rifle division of the first echelon, there were an average of two such posts, and in total there were about 30 of them in the zone of the planned breakthrough.

Frontal aviation did an enormous amount of work in reconnaissance of the enemy. Only from December 1, 1944 to January 10, 1945, 3747 reconnaissance sorties were carried out. Aerial reconnaissance was carried out to a depth of 270 km. All types of aviation took part in it, but

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attack aircraft and fighters were especially widely used. Reconnaissance was carried out in a variety of meteorological conditions and at various altitudes, from low-level flight to 6000 m. As a rule, each area in the short-range reconnaissance zone was illuminated at least three times a day and at least twice a day long-range reconnaissance areas.

During the preparatory period, up to 70,000 aerial photographs were taken covering an area of 103,587 sq. km. Most of the photographs of the filmed area (about 60%) revealed the defensive lines and fortifications of the enemy, the remaining 40% revealed a network of airfields, railway stations, highways, etc. When processing aerial reconnaissance data, it was possible not only to establish with reliable accuracy the system of German defensive lines on the entire depth to the Oder and the enemy airfield network, but also to determine the number of aircraft based on it. In addition, by the beginning of the operation, up to 100 batteries of medium-caliber anti-aircraft artillery, 35 batteries of small-caliber anti-aircraft artillery and 27 searchlights were uncovered by aviation reconnaissance.

Artillery aviation played an important role in reconnaissance of the enemy's defensive system. A separate corrective and reconnaissance aviation regiment of the front, which was used according to the plan of the artillery headquarters

lerii, for the period from October to December 1944, he made an areal aerial survey of the enemy's main defense line to a depth of 20 km, photographing 6479 square meters. km area. Along with aerial photographic reconnaissance, artillery aviation carried out systematic visual reconnaissance, making 146 sorties in three months. At night, visual reconnaissance was carried out from observation balloons.

In order to exclude the conduct of artillery and aviation training on abandoned or weakly fortified enemy positions, it was decided to carry out reconnaissance in force before attacking the main forces.

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advanced battalions. Konev:
"Reconnaissance in force is a well-known and not new thing," Ivan Stepanovich emphasized.
"However, we took into account that a well-known pattern had already taken shape, to which the enemy was accustomed and against which he had found an "antidote". The pattern was that reconnaissance in force was usually carried out a day before the offensive... This time we decided to act differently... Inflict a partial artillery strike on Private V. advance battalions into reconnaissance in force, and if it turns out that the enemy has remained in place, has not withdrawn his troops, immediately fall upon the enemy positions with all the might of artillery.

The operational concentration of troops began in November 1944. The 52nd and 59th armies were transferred to the front from the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. They arrived by night crossings, were placed in the indicated areas, forming them in engineering terms. In early December, the 10th breakthrough artillery corps concentrated in the front line. At various times during the period of concentration, separate artillery, tank and self-propelled units arrived, personnel were replenished, materiel for tank and artillery formations was brought up, trains with military cargo arrived, designed to replenish and equip troops with various types of weapons.

Railway transport during this period worked with great stress. The entire huge mass of troops and equipment delivered by rail transport had to be quickly and covertly unloaded and just as

quickly and discreetly place in areas of concentration.

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Since the arriving troops were to stay in these areas for a long time, a lot of work had to be done to disguise the concentration and deployment of these troops and to cover them from enemy observation. The engineering troops of the front, who were entrusted with this great work, successfully coped with the duties assigned to them.

As a result, by January 12, 1945, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were preparing for the upcoming offensive.

Much attention was paid to the engineering equipment of the bridgehead. This work was carried out under the leadership of the chief of the engineering troops of the front, General Ivan Ivanovich Galitsky, according to I.S. Konev, "a true master of his craft, who worked with inspiration and truly innovative courage." It began during the battles for securing the territory seized from the enemy on the left bank of the Vistula. Before the engineering troops, the front commander set the task of ensuring the covert deployment of troops and equipment, concentrating on the bridgehead. It was quite difficult to solve this problem, since on the entire Sandomierz bridgehead the position of Soviet troops in the defense was visible to the enemy from his observation posts to a depth of about 8 km. For the same reason, you needed to carry out work on the engineering equipment of starting positions for an attack exclusively at night. It was necessary to create on a significant part of the front - and mainly on the direction of the main attack - vertical masks 1.5-2 m high. Being 1-1.5 km from the first line of defense trenches, these masks made it possible to make covert advance troops. They were also used by the artillerymen when the artillery was brought to its original position.

In the main line of defense, every 3-5 km, main communication passages were opened, which, due to their size, ensured free oncoming movement or the passage of infantry in a column of two. These communication passages came from the first line of trenches,

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crossed the second line and ended at the nearest natural or artificial shelters.

A network of trenches and trenches was continuously developed, wood-and-earth firing points, machine-gun nests, artillery and mortar trenches, dugouts were built,

shelters, command and observation posts, etc. d.

As the documents of that time testify, by the beginning of the operation, 1,500 km of trenches and communication passages, 121 km of main communication passages, 110 km of wire fences, 73 vertical masks, 400 machine gun nests and bunkers, 10,000 machine gun , 6,000 gun, 5,000 mortar trenches, 1,116 command and observation posts, 10,250 earthen shelters, 257,125 anti-personnel and 285,178 anti-tank mines have been installed.

Optimal options were sought for using the forces and means available in the front, both during the breakthrough of enemy defenses and when operating in operational depth.

For the period of breaking through the main line of defense of the enemy, the commander of the front troops allocated part of the tank forces in the army of the first echelon as tanks in direct support of the infantry. The data given in Table 8 reflect the total number of tanks and self-propelled guns placed at the disposal of the army commanders for use as tanks of the NPP (first echelon), and their average density per 1 km of the breakthrough front.

In total, the first tank echelon contained 82 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts. If we add to the number of tanks and self-propelled guns of the 3rd Guards Army 161 tanks and 66 self-propelled guns of the 25th Tank Corps, which, after breaking through the first defensive line of the enemy, entered the battle and had to act together with it, then in total in the direction the main attack of the 3rd Guards Army, there were 285 armored units. Accordingly, in the 5th Guards Ar

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Table 8

COMPOSITION OF THE FIRST TANK ECHELON IN THE STRIP OF THE 1st UKRAINIAN FRONT

o Medium

Army p ro Tanks self-propelled guns Total rupture density in
km 1 km

3rd Guards 2 20 38 58 29

59th - 21 63 84 - 60th E
\\u003d 63 63 21

Total: 39 352] 468 820 21

missions of 187 tanks and 65 self-propelled guns of the 31st Tank Corps, 210 tanks and 44 self-propelled guns of the 4th Guards Tank Corps increased the number of tanks and self-propelled guns operating on the front of the 5th Guards Army during the period of struggle in the enemy's tactical defense zone, up to 659 units.

The main tasks of the tanks of the first echelon were to ensure an infantry attack and a rapid breakthrough of the enemy defenses so that already on the first day of the offensive all conditions were created for bringing the success development echelon into battle. For the same purpose, long-range tank groups were created from separate tank brigades. One of them - the 150th separate tank brigade - was intended to capture Shchetno - a large center of resistance, located 20 km from the front line of defense in the path of the 4th Guards Tank Army, and the other - the 152nd separate tank brigade - was aimed at a large node of resistance. The remaining tank forces were distributed as follows: 1671 vehicles were in

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the second tank echelon (the success development echelon was the 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies) and 394 vehicles made up the third tank echelon (reserve of the front commander).

Khmilnik, standing in the way of the movement of the 3rd Guards Tank Army. These brigades were to act together with the forward echelons of the infantry and were given the task of capturing the centers of resistance assigned to them.

One of the most important sections of breakthrough planning was the artillery offensive plan. When the front was saturated with artillery, it was necessary to plan the fire of 12,000-13,000 guns and mortars in such a way that it would have the maximum effect and ensure a breakthrough within the planned time frame with minimal losses. In order to more closely link the actions of artillery with the actions of infantry, regimental artillery groups were created in the regiments of divisions of the first echelon, which included artillery regiments of rifle divisions and artillery of mortar and howitzer brigades of artillery divisions of the breakthrough.

In the armies of the strike force of the front, the regimental groups were quite strong. Thus, in the 52nd Army, each regimental group consisted of 5-6 artillery and mortar regiments. The commanders of these groups received the opportunity to flexibly maneuver fire, concentrate

wailing him on the targets indicated to them by the commanders of the formations.

Divisional artillery groups are created in divisions of the first echelon, each consisting of several howitzer artillery regiments and brigades. These groups included artillery of high power and artillery of divisions of the second echelon, attracted for the period of artillery preparation. To combat enemy mortars, special counter-mortar groups were created in divisions of the first echelon. They consisted of howitzer and mortar batteries brought in from second echelon and artillery divisions.

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A.S. Zhadov presents a combat award to M. Babadzhanov

reinforcement parts. The composition of these groups ranged from two to three divisions. They were commanded by commanders of artillery or mortar regiments. In the corps, unlike the 1st Belorussian Front, artillery groups were not created. Their role was filled by subgroups of army artillery groups, each of which consisted of three to four cannon artillery brigades. Sometimes they included heavy howitzer brigades of high power. These artillery subgroups were created along the lines of the corps operating in the first echelon.

missions.

Support for the attack with a barrage of fire was planned in the armies and rifle divisions. The artillery commanders of the armies (in the 52nd and 5th Guards Armies - the commanders of the breakthrough artillery corps) developed the basic schemes of the fire bar and installed the artillery formations and units involved in the fire bar. on the artillery commanders of the rifle divisions. The front artillery headquarters checked the planning of the artillery offensive in the army artillery headquarters,

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corps and divisions and the preparation of fire in artillery groups, divisions and batteries. The artillery offensive plans worked out in the armies were personally checked and approved by the commander of the front troops.

According to Marshal I.S. Konev, the attack of the main forces should have been preceded by the attack of the advanced battalions, allocated from each rifle division of the first echelon. Each forward battalion was supported by two or three artillery or mortar

regiments from divisional or regimental artillery groups, two to three companies of 82-mm mortars, a battery of 120-mm regimental mortars, a division: guards mortars M-13 or M-8 and 8-12 direct-fire guns.

Before the forward battalions attacked, a fire raid lasting 7-10 minutes was planned against trenches, gun emplacements, mortar batteries, and observation posts both in the battalion's zone of action and on the flanks. All targets were reduced to areas of suppression; three or four sections were combined into a suppression area. In addition, volleys of guards mortars were planned at especially important strongholds in the nearest depth of defense. Army artillery groups were given the task of fighting enemy firing batteries. Accompanying the attack of the forward battalions was planned by the method of successive concentrations of fire on the call of the infantry. In the event of stubborn resistance or counterattacks by the enemy, schemes were developed for massive fire on areas and lines of possible concentration and resistance of the enemy (settlements, individual heights, forest edges, roads, etc.).

Considering that the operations of the forward battalions were to begin before dawn, measures were taken to facilitate the orientation of the infantry - lighting the orienting settlements with 122-mm illumination shells and indicating the direction of attack of the forward battalions with tracer shells of 37-mm anti-aircraft batteries. In the 13th and 52nd

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armies, in the zone of which the 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies were to develop success, instructions were developed on artillery support for the introduction of tank armies into the breakthrough and plans for the interaction of artillery of combined arms armies with tank and mechanized formations of tank armies. Instructions on the organization of artillery support for the introduction of tank armies into the gap established: the lines for overtaking infantry by tank army formations and their routes, the composition of artillery allocated to support tank army formations; organization of interaction, target designation and call of fire; methods of work of officers-spotter from radium tanks; organization of communications between artillery and tank and mechanized formations. The composition of the artillery assigned to escort the tank army in the operational depth, the procedure for its reassignment and joining the columns of the tank army were outlined.

In the plans for the interaction of artillery with tank and mechanized formations of tank armies, they were determined by periods of battle and lines:

the importance of concentrating artillery fire on pre-determined areas and areas, signals that tanks will reach the indicated lines and call for artillery fire on designated areas and areas. Fire schemes were attached to the cooperation plans. To support the tank armies in the 13th and 52nd armies, two or three cannon or howitzer artillery brigades were detached from the breakthrough artillery divisions for each tank or mechanized corps of the first echelon of the tank army. The commanders of the artillery brigades assigned one spotter officer each, who were to follow in the radium tanks together with the commanders of the supported corps of the tank armies.

In the lane of movement of the tank armies, concentrated fire was prepared in advance at six lines to a depth of 15-16 km. Areas of fire concentration were marked at the enemy's defense nodes in depth and along

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areas where, due to the nature of the terrain, there may have been a concentration of enemy troops for delivering counterattacks and counterattacks. Preparing to break through the enemy's defenses, Marshal I.S. Konev demanded that the commanders of the subunits, units, formations and formations that were in the first echelon carefully work out all the issues of organizing the battle on the ground.

"We, senior military commanders, before an offensive, must crawl around the entire front line ourselves," Konev taught subordinate commanders. "We need to see everything with our own eyes, weigh and evaluate the objects of attack... Some people say that such rough work on the ground is the business of lower tactical commanders. Che fluff, harmful nonsense! .. Visual intelligence is perfectly combined with operational art.

Another very important issue in the preparation of the operation was the organization of effective engagement of the enemy. Its high efficiency, first of all, created the condition for achieving the goal when breaking through enemy defenses in depth. Therefore, after the reconnaissance carried out, the Military Council of the front considered in detail the plan of the artillery offensive according to two options. For the main of them, it was decided to plan artillery preparation for a duration of one hundred and seven minutes. Forty-five minutes before its end, the actions of the demonstration attack platoons were planned, and fifteen minutes later the last fire raid followed. An essential feature of the artillery preparation schedule was the presence of a seven-minute fire raid, in which all the fire fell on artillery, mortars and enemy command posts. Support for the attack of infantry and tanks was provided by a double fire shaft to a depth of up to three

kilometers and their accompaniment by a consistent concentration of fire to the depth of the main line of defense. Subsequently, artillery, the density of which in the breakthrough areas reached 230-250 guns and mortars per 1 kilometer, was supposed to provide fire for the advancing troops throughout the entire depth of the operation.

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Responsible tasks were assigned to aviation. Two hours before the start of the offensive, it was supposed to strike at enemy command and observation posts, as well as communication centers of the enemy in order to disrupt the command and control of his troops. After that

aviation efforts were switched to support and cover troops when they broke through the tactical zone of enemy defenses, to ensure the introduction of tank armies into battle, and escort and support of troops during operations in the operational depth. All issues of organizing an air offensive were carefully worked out by the commander of the 2nd Air Army, General S.A. Krasovsky and his staff at command and staff exercises, staff training and combat bombing exercises.

An exceptionally important task was solved by tank formations and formations of the front. At a meeting of the leadership of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, Konev noted: "The commander of the army, General Rybalko, and the chief of staff, General Bakhmetyev, have already outlined to you the plan of the operation and the proposed actions. I fully agree with them... Artillery, Pavel Semyonovich, place columns at the head. This is a matter of principle. It is necessary that the tanks be free in their actions, and not fettered, not drawn into battle by the advanced forces of the enemy. If the artillery is in the head, it will forge the actions of the enemy, will make it possible for our tanks to return in time, under the cover of artillery they will be able to choose a vulnerable flank and hit the enemy in parts. In addition, artillery, being closer to the head, will be better able to support the tank attack with its fire.

cov..."

S.A. Krasovsky

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"We are standing on the threshold of ... Germany," emphasized the commander of the troops of the front. One more leap is needed on the way to complete victory. We had the great honor of being among the first to break into the borders of this country. The closer to the cherished goal, the fiercer the struggle will be. This task is up to us. Our 1st Ukrainian Front has a huge strike and fire force. Panzer armies... mechanized and tank corps... are aiming to the west. They have to break ahead, seize the water barriers of Nida, Pilica, Vistula and Oder on the move, seize defensive lines, large railway junctions of Kielce, Radomsko, Czestochowa, Krakow, paralyze the rear of the enemy, disrupt command and control ...

Do not get involved in small skirmishes, bypass the nodes of resistance, do not linger in cities, go out into operational spaces, do not look around ... Tank troops are a steel arrow that must successfully penetrate deep into Germany.

After the plan of operation was brought to the attention of the executors and the troops received instructions on their tasks, the commander of the troops of the front, the commanders of the armies and their headquarters concentrated their main attention on checking the PREPARATION of the troops for the fulfillment of these tasks. They went into every detail of the planning and preparation of the operation. The front army commander considered and approved the decisions of subordinate commanders up to and including the division commander, and army commanders, up to and including regiment and battalion commanders. Throughout the breakthrough sector, the commander of the front troops repeatedly checked and corrected the composition of the artillery groups and all the schemes of artillery fires.

Marshal I.S. Konev:

"Preparation for the operation went in all directions. With the commanders of the armies and the commanders of corps and divisions, we held staff exercises-games; to clarify issues of future interaction between armies, studying

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who participated in the breakthrough, the chief of staff of the front, Vasily Danilovich Sokolovsky, organized special staff exercises with communications equipment; in the armies, corps and divisions, meetings were held with commanders of units and subunits; in units - tactical exercises with live fire. Assault battalions were specially trained, equipped with everything necessary to break through the enemy defenses: tanks, guns, mortars. The battalions were given large groups of sappers.

Assault battalions from the very beginning were to

to set the tone in the attack, accordingly, commanders were selected for them - experienced and determined officers. I must say that there was someone to choose from. By the beginning of 1945, almost all of our battalion commanders were wartime officers. Many of them grew up from soldiers, sergeants who returned to the front after being wounded. They had more than one military operation behind them. By that time, we had never met a battalion commander without serious combat experience at all.

... Artillery was being prepared, infantry was being prepared, tank crews and aviation were being prepared. Tank troops were engaged in fire training of crews, practiced firing on the spot, the swiftness of action, mobility and maneuverability in battle. I remember exercises organized by Colonel-General Lelyushenko, Commander of the 4th Tank Army. Tank firing on the move and the destruction of enemy vehicles were practiced. The shooting was not at mock-ups, but at real ones captured in the battles here, on the Sandomierz bridgehead, "tigers" and even at the so-called "royal tigers".

During this period, a lot of worries fell, of course, to the lot of political workers. Members of the Military Council of the Front K.V. Krainyukov and N.T. Kalchenko, head of the political department of the front F.V. Yashechkin were constantly in the army and not only participated in the training directly related to the military side of the operation, but also solved on the spot a very wide range of issues related to the moral and political training of personal

composition.

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We took into account that in the course of the operation we would have to enter the territory of the enemy, who had brought so much grief to our people and committed so many atrocities on Soviet territory. Therefore, educational work has its own specifics, which it would be extremely unreasonable to neglect.

The range of issues that confronted us included the material and technical support of all troops. Member of the Military Council N.T. Kal

chenko, together with the head of the rear of the front, Lieutenant General N.P. Anisimov.

Much preparatory work was carried out in tactical instances. The emphasis was on the combat training of personnel. Thus, in the 25th Tank Corps, the mobile group of the 3rd Guards Army, training took place every day for 10-12 hours. In the morning hours, political classes were held in dugouts and dugouts, political information was held. Most of the time planned for tactics, fire and special training, the soldiers were engaged in the field,

in equipped towns. The preparation of the subunits was completed with tactical exercises with live firing on the topic "Advance of a tank (motorized rifle) battalion against the enemy in the operational depth of the enemy defense."

In early December, General V.N. Gordov conducted a command and staff exercise, to which he also attracted the command staff of the 25th tank corps, General E.I. Fomins, colonels P.M. Eliseeva and M.D. Zubkov. Somewhat later, the army headquarters organized weekly radio broadcasts by V.N. Gordov nirovki with access to the field of willows

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concentration areas. At the end of the month, General Fominykh held a command-staff exercise involving the headquarters of brigades and regiments. Then the corps headquarters was involved in the front-line command and staff exercise under the leadership of General V.D. Sokolovsky. Corps commanders, brigade commanders and their political deputies took part in a front-line conference dedicated to the tactics of combined arms offensive combat.

Commanders, staffs, and all personnel of the corps carefully studied the enemy, especially the organization of defense on water barriers, in populated areas and fortified areas. This task was solved by analyzing reconnaissance reports, information materials worked out by the front headquarters, at tactical briefings with officers and at training camps. At the beginning of January, the commanders and officers of the headquarters of the formations of the corps took part in reconnaissance three times in the zone of the 3rd Guards Army. As a result, the system of fire and engineering obstacles was studied in detail in front of the front line of the enemy's defense and to the depth of the first position of his 304th and 168th infantry divisions.

Taking into account that the combat tasks of the corps in the operational depth will have to be solved at a high pace, widely maneuvering on the battlefield, in isolation from the rest of the army forces, the commander and chief of staff paid special attention to the organization of command and control.

A significant load in both fronts during the preparation of the operation fell on the signal troops. On the 1st Ukrainian Front, they restored and used underground cables with a length of more than 460 km, an additional 1069 km of telephone and

telegraph lines, 1769 km of communication lines were repaired. The technical condition of the mobile means of communication (armored vehicles, motor vehicles, motorcycles) was carefully checked. A specially created commission conducted an inspection of the operational condition of the radio station and receivers. In the act drawn up by her of December 28, 1944, it was indicated that all means of communication were

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in good condition and ready to go. However, shortcomings were also noted, over the elimination of which the signalmen had to work hard in the time remaining before the transition to the offensive.

By the beginning of the operation, the command posts were close to the front lines. The command posts of the combined arms armies on the 1st Belorussian Front were deployed on bridgeheads 8-12 km from the front line, rifle corps 3-8 km, divisions 1-4 km, rifle regiments 1-2 km. Observation posts moved forward from the command posts, 1-3 km away from the front line in combined arms armies, up to 1.5 km in rifle corps and divisions, and 0.3-1.0 km in rifle regiments. The commanders of agitation, tank formations and formations, as a rule, deployed their command posts near the command posts of combined arms commanders. This ensured uninterrupted control and interaction of troops during the operation. The approach to organizing command posts on the 1st Ukrainian Front was similar.

The strategic interaction of the fronts required the provision of a reliable connection between the interaction between the command posts of the headquarters of the interacting fronts, at the junctions of fronts and armies, between mobile formations of different fronts when operating in operational depth, between the air armies of interacting fronts, between troops of different fronts acting towards each other. friend during joint operations to encircle and destroy enemy groupings. The rapid offensive of the troops required high rates of construction and restoration of communication lines, the rapid deployment of communication centers, and the provision of continuous and reliable communications when moving headquarters. The Vistula-Oder operation was characterized by large regroupings of troops, which caused an urgent need to ensure communication during the advancement of troops to new directions.

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The complexity of organizing and providing communication front-

comrades (the chiefs of communications of the 1st Belorussian - Lieutenant General of the Signals Troops P.Ya. Maksimenko, the 1st Ukrainian - Lieutenant General of the Signals Troops I.T. Bulychev) consisted primarily in the fact that the operation was carried out at great depth. In addition, the organization of communications was also complicated by the fact that the fronts delivered strikes from isolated bridgeheads (Pulavsky, Magnushevsky and Sandomirsky), on which the shock groupings of the fronts were concentrated. The troops of the fronts included a large number of mobile formations and formations, including four tank armies. Ensuring command and control of troops became more complicated due to the fact that, according to the plan of the operation, it was planned to deliver deep frontal cutting blows, develop an offensive in separate directions with a significant separation of mobile troops from combined arms formations and formations.

Additional difficulties arose due to the fact that the main blow of the 1st Belorussian Front, for example, was delivered by the center and left wing of the front, and its direction at the beginning of the operation did not coincide with the main Warsaw-Poznan communication axis. Intelligence showed that the enemy had a fairly developed network of wire communications, but with the start of the operation, the Nazis destroyed all trunk and road communication lines to a depth of 25 km. This required the construction of new lines to follow the advancing troops and significant reconstruction of local lines of communication. The construction of wire communication lines was hampered by the fact that they had to be built in soil frozen to 40 cm. This reduced the pace of work by half compared to the summer period. When organizing radio communications, it was foreseen that, based on the high saturation of the troops with radio equipment, mutual interference could occur. The limited range of medium power radio stations and the impossibility of operating radio stations on the move were also taken into account.

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During the operation, to ensure command and control of the troops, it was supposed to use all types of communications: wire, radio and mobile means.

When deciding on the organization of wire communications, the chiefs of communications of the fronts laid the basis for the general plan of the operation, but the main thing they were guided by was the direction of the main attack, the operational formation, the scope and pace of the operation. Based on the experience of previous operations, it was planned to build communication lines at a rate of 25 km and restore them at a rate of 40 km per day.

The plan for organizing wire communications of the 1st Belorussian Front provided for the construction and restoration of the following communication lines: the main communication axis

zi front Warsaw, Lovich, Poznan with a capacity of ten wires (not counting two HF circuits); auxiliary axis Varna, Gruiets, Lovich with a capacity of six wires (plus one HF circuit); eight army communication lines, four wires each, and one HF circuit: six rocares crossing the main axis in the places of the alleged command posts of the front, four to six wires each; restoration of an underground cable cable for 48 cores (124) along the route Prague, Warsaw, Lowicz, Kutno, Poznań.

With minor features, wire communications were also planned for the 1st Ukrainian Front.

On both fronts, communication between the armies and aviation was ensured. On the 1st Belorussian Front, up to 30% of front-line wires were allocated for the 16th Air Army. The headquarters of the general military and tank armies, in addition to communication with the headquarters of the 16th Air Army, had a direct telegraph connection with the headquarters of the aviation formations supporting them.

The peculiarity of the organization of communication with artillery was that the combined-arms armies maintained communication with it through the communication lines of the command and observation posts of the front artillery commanders and the same posts of the army artillery commanders. Except this

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In battle, the legendary "Katyusha"

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th channel, communication was also maintained through the communication lines of the observation posts of the army commanders. On the 1st Belorussian Front, in addition to permanent wires, one cable-pole company was allocated to the front artillery communications chief, and in the armies one cable-pole platoon.

With the transition of the Soviet troops to the offensive, the wire communication worked uninterruptedly and ensured reliable command and control of the troops.

In the construction and restoration of communication lines, full coordination was achieved between the work of front-line and army communication units, as well as government high-frequency communication units. In the axial axes, all these forces and means were united under the general leadership of the chief of the axis of communication of the front, and in the army axes - the chief of communications of the army.

Given the nature and scope of the forthcoming operation, much attention was paid to the organization of radio communications on both fronts. One of the most important tasks in ensuring command and control of front troops was the organization of stable radio communications with combined arms, tank and air armies, separate tank and cavalry corps, as well as ensuring communications between combined arms and mobile formations. On average, by the beginning of the operation, each front had two radio companies of the front communications regiments, a separate radio division and a radio company of a separate communications battalion of the logistics department.

The presence of a significant number of radio facilities ensured communication between the fronts and the General Staff, neighbors and subordinate headquarters. Communication was organized by radio directions and networks. Radio directions were organized for each army, individual tank and cavalry corps. To the armies operating in the direction of the main attack, and to the tank armies, duplex directions were additionally created for the work of "Bodo-radio". On the fronts

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three radio networks of interaction ALA of the armies operating in the center, on the right and left wings were created. At the fronts, a radio network of the front commander was created on low-power radio stations and an emergency network on duty.

The widespread use of mobile means of communication was envisaged, especially on bridgeheads.

Indeed, in the course of hostilities, mobile means of the 1st Belorussian Front, for example, carried out 851 sorties (235 thousand 215 km), 1 thousand 79 motor flights (almost 50 thousand km), 925 motor flights (about 9.4 thousand km). 2 million 201 thousand 187 packets of various correspondence passed through the reporting points.

As a result, in the initial position for an offensive when breaking through the enemy's tactical defense zone, the main form of communication on the fronts and armies was wired communications. Including in tank armies cable, permanent lines and high frequency. Wired communications fully ensured the command and control of troops along the line of command and interaction communications. The main factors that ensured the reliable operation of wire communications were the following: the concentration of sufficient forces on the construction and restoration of the communication axes of the fronts; concentration under the unified leadership of the head of the communications front of the forces and means of government communications, army construction and

operational communications units for the construction and restoration of communications lines to the armies (army communications axes); widespread use of the networks of permanent wires that have been preserved in the liberated territory; the use, if necessary, of cable pole facilities, the organization of auxiliary communication centers.

The stability of radio communications during the operation was planned to be achieved by separating radio facilities when moving bodies and command posts; organization of communications with armies and mobile units

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niyami on 2-3 channels, while the radio direction was used as the main one; appropriate selection of frequencies for day and night operation; organization of relaying (use of intermediate radio stations) while providing communication with remote headquarters. For the first time, a radio communication room was organized to provide radio communications between the command and headquarters of the front. The radio communication room was equipped in the area of operational control and made it possible to simultaneously conduct three radiotelegraph conversations with any formations of the front and receive any transmitter of the radio center through the cross. From January 15 to January 30, 118 negotiations were held, taking a total of 1751.2 hours. Bodo radio conversations with the tank armies were carried out directly from mobile Bodo radio sets. A large role in the increased operational transmission of information was to be played by the networks of the front commander on the RBM radio station with antennas of the "American" type. Sometimes these radio stations at the front headquarters were replaced by SCR-399 radio stations, and in front formations by RSB radio stations with extended ranges. The network of the commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front was successfully used to communicate with the headquarters of the right and left wings of the front, to which fixed waves were used over other networks, giving unstable operation at a distance of 150-200 km, especially at night. It was planned to send radio stations SCR-299 with the head of the radio communication department of the front to the most remote formations.

The organization of the radio center of the front headquarters, the presence of BTs-312, 45-PK receivers and powerful radio stations, as well as the widespread use of improved and directional antennas, ensured a wide maneuver of radio equipment in the networks and directions of the front. All the most "difficult" communications were transferred to the best receivers, and more powerful radio stations with first-class radio operators were used for them. Availability of up to 30 simultaneously operating destinations and networks

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in very narrow sections of the wave range, it became necessary, in order to avoid mutual interference, to carry the transmitters from the receiving center by 3-4 km. Permanent and pole lines were built between the receiving and transmitting centers. This event simultaneously pursued the goal of radio masking the command post. A wired connection was established between the command post and the radio center via Bodo, ST-35 and by telephone.

In connection with the expected maneuver of troops, and especially in mobile formations along the front, the possibility was provided for the operation of each formation of the front in any of the communication networks of interaction with the call sign assigned to it. The experience of the operation showed that with a small composition of interaction communication networks and a good selection of waves, they completely provide interaction communication and communication with neighbors. Communication between the headquarters of the ground troops and the headquarters of the 16th Air Army, as a rule, was provided through the radio stations of aviation representatives.

As follows from the reports of the headquarters of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, there were no communication interruptions in the operational instances throughout the entire operation. In the technical section, the coefficient of stability was 90-95 percent.

Responsible tasks had to be solved in the operation by engineering units, including sapper units. On the 1st Belorussian Front they were divided into five echelons. The first echelon was intended for operations with the "special echelons" of the infantry, the second - for operations with the main forces of the advancing troops, the third - ALA for solving problems, being behind the main forces, the fourth - for operations according to the plans of the chiefs of engineering troops of the fronts and armies. The fifth echelon was their reserve. The document worked out at the headquarters of the engineering troops reflected the composition of each of the echelons, the tasks performed, and the calculation of the forces and means of strengthening rifle divisions was given.

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Engineer echelons and their purpose

First echelon

Second echelon

Operates with special infantry echelons

and executes:

Acts with the main forces of the advancing troops
and performs:

- engineering reconnaissance of the enemy's defense;

- engineering reconnaissance of the enemy
defense and terrain;

- arrangement of passages in enemy barriers and the passage
of infantry, tanks and artillery through them;

- expansion of passages in the enemy's
barriers, arranged by sappers of the first echelon,
arrangement of additional passages, ensuring
the passage of the main forces of the
advancing troops through the barriers

- accompanies NPP tanks and minesweepers (166th
Tank Engineer Regiment)

- participation in the assault on strongholds;

- escort of tanks and SU NPP;

Calculation: from a platoon to a company of sappers for each
"special echelon" (infantry battalion)

- reconnaissance and demining of military
roads.

The first echelon included regimental and divisional sappers
attached to the troops of army engineering and sapper
and front-line assault engineering sapper units and
subunits.

Calculation: rifle divisions advancing on the main

board, attached to one motor-engineering battalion

The second echelon included divisional and corps sappers, as well as army and front-line engineering units and subunits attached to divisions and corps.

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IN THE OFFENSIVE OF THE 1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT

Table 9

third echelon

Acts behind the main forces of the advancing troops in order to:

fourth tier

Acts according to the plans of the chiefs of engineering troops of the front and armies.

fifth echelon

Reserve head

Nickname: engineer

Nerny troops of the front and armies

— terrain checks and differences

objects for mining

– designation and repair of roads and column tracks

Purpose:

- guidance of crossings from personnel parks

— reconnaissance and demining of
cities and large settlements

— restoration and construction of roads

— complete demining of
minefields
the enemy remaining in the rear of
our troops

- ensuring the introduction of mobile
connections into the breakthrough

— construction of high-water
bridges on highways and railways

- ensuring the passage of subsequent
(behind the main forces) echelons of
troops and transports

- securing the terrain with equipment of
defensive lines

- covering the joints and flanks
with mine-explosive means

— destruction of enemy fortifications

- securing lines captured from the enemy

— construction of army and front
command and observation posts

The third echelon included

army engineering and sapper

units and subunits and given to the
armies engineering, sapper, motor
engineering

and motoponton battalions, as well
as military construction

detachments

The fourth echelon included
army and front-line engineering
units, military construction
teams, UOS, as well as
the local population mobilized for
engineering work.

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In the second half of December 1944, at the direction of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Chief Marshal of Artillery Nikolai Nikolayevich Voronov, Commander of Armored and Mechanized Troops, Commander of the Red Army Artillery, Deputy Commissar of Defense, left for the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian Fronts as representatives of the Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command - Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Marshal of the Armored Forces Yakov Nikolaevich Fedorenko, 1st Deputy Commander of the Air Force, Colonel General of Aviation Grigory Alekseevich Vorozheykin, as well as a representative of the Main Political Directorate, Colonel General Efim Afanasyevich Shchadenko, in the recent past, head of the Main Directorate of Formation and Staffing troops, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense.

Instructions I.V. Stalin were very brief and clear: check how the preparations for the operation are going, help in any way you can.

Having introduced themselves, as is customary, as the commander of the troops of the fronts, the representatives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command set to work, first on the 1st Ukrainian, then on the 1st Belorussian fronts. They focused their attention on four questions. The first is the provision of troops with weapons, equipment, ammunition, and their qualitative state. The second issue is the professional training of personnel, including command personnel. The essence of the third question is to determine the degree to which commanders (commanders) understand the place and role of subordinate troops in the forthcoming offensive. On the-

Finally, the fourth question is what can and should be done to increase the effectiveness of the use of available forces and means.

The ten-day work of the representatives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and a rather large group of specialists who arrived with them ended with extended meetings of the military councils of the fronts, meetings of the leadership of one or another branch of the troops, at which recommendations were brought to eliminate the identified problems.

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prosperity in the preparation of the operation. Marshals G.K. Zhukov and I.S. Konev thanked the Stavka representatives for their assistance.

The year 1944 was ending. Preparations for the upcoming operation went on as usual. The day of the Stalin Constitution passed, on the eve of which G.K. Zhukov received a large number of congratulations - on December 1 he celebrated his forty-eighth birthday.

... December 21 is a memorable day for all Soviet people - Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin turned 65 years old. In the morning G.K. Zhukov called K.K. Rokossovsky and I.S. Konev, asking one question - how and when will we congratulate the Supreme? Agreed - on HF in the intervals between 13 and 14 hours. With Rokossovsky, however, the conversation did not end there. Georgy Konstantinovich, and then Ivan Stepanovich congratulated him on his birthday, wishing him good health and military success.

"Look, Konstantin Konstantinovich, if you don't mind, I'll come to you tonight," said Zhukov, saying goodbye. "Konev is far away, he won't be able to, of course, but I'm pretty close to you. So wait. I'll take Telegin with me too..."

At noon Rokossovsky received a phone call from Stalin. He asked about the situation, accepted congratulations, congratulated Konstantin Konstantinovich.

..Zhukov arrived at Rokossovsky's command post, located in a medieval castle, exactly at 19:00. He was accompanied by a member of the Military Council, Konstantin Fedorovich Telegin. They were met by K.K. Rokossovsky, member of the Military Council N.E. Subbotin, chief of staff A.N. Bogolyubov, head of the armed forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front. We went into a small room where a table was set. Zhukov congratulated Konstantin Konstantinovich on his 48th birthday, presented him with a gift - a figurine of a rider

on a horse.

The first toast was raised to the Supreme Commander

blowing, the second - for the longevity of Rokossovsky.

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After thirty or forty minutes the guests dispersed, leaving the two marshals alone. After all, they had many years of joint service: in 1924-1925, both studied at the Higher Cavalry School in Leningrad, in the 30s they served in the 7th Samara Cavalry Division, and later in the Kiev Special Military District. Since the beginning of the war, they fought near Moscow, met in Stalingrad and near Kursk. So there were people to remember, especially his first mentors G.D. Guy, V.K. Blucher, V.M. Primakov. The conversation ended almost after midnight, once again, by the way, the issue of joint actions in the Vistula-Oder operation was discussed.

... A week later, G.K. Zhukov congratulated the chief of staff of the front, Mikhail Sergeevich Malinin, on his birthday. He is 45 years old. Congratulated him and K.K. Rokossovsky. The general and the marshal began joint service in the summer of 1941 in the 16th Army, continued in 1942 on the Don Front, and in 1943 on the Central Front.

The New Year was approaching. The first days of January 1945 arrived.

Marshal I.S. Konev:

"It's January 9th. Eleven days left before the start of the operation. All the main things have been done, but, of course, as always before big events, there is still a lot to do. On this day, the Acting Chief of the General Staff A.I. Antonov and said that in connection with the difficult situation that had developed among the allies on the Western Front in the Ardennes, they turned to us with a request to expedite the start of our offensive as much as possible; after this appeal, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command revised the timing of the start of the offensive operation. The 1st Ukrainian Front is to launch an offensive not on January 20th, but on January 12th.

Antonov spoke on behalf of Stalin. Since the operation has already been approved by the Stavka and is fully planned, no changes, except for the timing, and no

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There were no other fundamental questions in this conversation.

I replied to Alexei Innokent'evich that by the new deadline set by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the front would be ready for the offensive.

I do not want to exaggerate or diminish in hindsight the difficulties that immediately confronted us in connection with the postponement of the deadline. Basically, we were ready for the operation, which is why I did not hesitate to answer Antonov. But more than eight days, which we were deprived of in an instant, had to be made up for by the most intense work, putting it all into the remaining two and a half days. Enormous organizational work was required from the command of all levels to bring the preparation to the end. In recent months we have received replacements who have been trained just before the offensive. A whole program of exercises was launched. Now this program had to be curtailed and reduced at its final stage, which, of course, was not easy. Many other shortcomings were also found out, which were eliminated in an exceptionally short time.

In a word, those eight days that they took from us, in truth, were extremely necessary for us. But this necessary time was taken from us in order to help the allies, and we at the fronts (I'm talking about my front, but I think that the picture was the same everywhere) understood that the shift was dictated by considerations of a general strategic order and, therefore, , you have to go for it. As a front commander, I internally agreed with the decision taken by the Headquarters.

Among other things, the postponement of the onset did not please us because of the meteorological forecasts. For the second ten days of January, the forecast was more favorable than for the coming days. Preparing to launch the offensive on January 12, we already had to reckon with the reality that, due to bad weather, we would have to suppress the German defenses with artillery alone, without aviation.

A similar order to postpone the offensive of the 1st Ukrainian Front was received on the same day

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commanders of the 1st Belorussian and 2nd Belorussian fronts.

The last preparations for the transition of troops to the offensive were being completed. Among the many activities carried out at that time on the fronts, a special place was occupied by the problem of surprise.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

0 surprise and military cunning

The entire experience of the history of armed struggle testifies to the great importance attached to the achievement of surprise "applicable, including military cunning, by generals and commanders of all times and peoples.

Among the diverse literature of ancient China, a special place is occupied by works on the art of war, and above all the Seven Books, which are selected military treatises, the main of which are Sun Tzu and Wu Tzu, named after the names of ancient generals. Under their influence, all subsequent military-theoretical literature of Ancient China was created. The study of the mentioned treatises in China and Japan in the 10th and 20th centuries was mandatory for obtaining a higher military education. The treatise "Sun Tzu" is of particular value, since the views of the author, one of the first military theorists known to us, on achieving surprise have come down to us in the form of a more or less integral system.

The great Russian commander Generalissimo of the Russian Empire A.V. Suvorov, giving instructions to General M.A. Miloradovich, emphasized: "Bayonets, speed, surprise! The enemy thinks that you are a hundred, two hundred miles away, and you have doubled your heroic step, swoop down quickly, suddenly. The enemy sings, walks, waits for you from an open field, and you, from behind steep mountains, from dense forests, fly at him like snow on your head; strike, crush, beat, do not let yourself come to your senses; whoever is frightened is half defeated; fear has big eyes, one in ten will appear. Be perspicacious, careful, have a definite goal. A great master of achieving suddenness was Field Marshal M.I. Kutuzov.

The desire to achieve surprise was manifested from the first days of the Great Patriotic War both by the Soviet command and by the command of the enemy. V. Berezhtkov, the translator of the Soviet delegation at the Tehran conference, recalled that, at the suggestion of W. Churchill to think over the secrecy of the preparation of the Overlord cooperation, I.V. Stalin shared the experience of the Soviet side. "He said that in such cases we deceive the enemy by building models of tanks, aircraft, creating false air

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dromes. Then, with the help of tractors, these models are set in motion, and enemy reconnaissance reports to their command about these movements, and the Germans think that it is in this place that a strike is being prepared. [3 in a number of places up to five to eight thousand models of tanks, up to two thousand models of aircraft, a large number of false airfields are being created. In addition, the enemy is deceived with the help of radio ... At the same time, where an offensive is really being prepared, complete calm reigns. All shipments are made at night.

Of the offensive operations carried out earlier by the Soviet troops, the task of achieving out-of-

zapnosti in the counteroffensive near Stalingrad, Kyiv, Belorussian, Yassko-Kishinevskaya and during other operations.

In preparing the Vistula-Oder operation for the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the command of the fronts, the issue of achieving surprise, that is, providing strikes that were unexpected for the enemy in time, place and strength, delivered by Soviet troops in the central sector of the Soviet German front, became one of the difficult problems that needed to be resolved. . It is well known that unexpected troop actions make it possible to take the enemy by surprise, stun him, disrupt plans and force him to make ill-conceived decisions, paralyze the will to conduct organized combat operations and thereby create and ensure favorable conditions for defeat in a short time and with minimal costs. yourself with losses. Marshal G.K. Zhukov, for example, considered surprise as one of the basic and most important principles of military art, "the largest factor influencing the success of an operation is the achievement of operational and tactical surprise."

Based on the experience gained during the Great Patriotic War, it seemed that this problem could be solved only by a set of measures taken and, above all, by the implementation of camouflage - one of the types of combat support aimed at hiding troops and military installations from enemy reconnaissance and misleading him. regarding the location, number, composition of forces, actions and intentions of their troops. It is achieved using natural and

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artificial masks, technical means, periodic changes in the areas of disposition of troops (naval forces) and command posts, false movements and deceptive actions of units, formations, associations, concealment of true and arrangement of false objects, destruction or change of some of their external features and properties. Operational camouflage is one of the main means of achieving surprise. It is carried out with the aim of disorienting the enemy with regard to the nature of the upcoming military operations, the concept of the operation, its scale, and the time of the conduct. One of the main tasks of camouflage is to hide the strike force of the front (army) from the enemy. The experience of operations carried out by the Soviet troops showed that the main methods of their implementation include enemy disinformation, the widespread use of various technical means, terrain conditions, measures to preserve military secrets, and covert command and control of troops.

Before the fronts operating in the Warsaw-

Berlin direction, by the autumn of 1944 there was a large enemy grouping. VGK rate. decided to weaken it and took measures to disorientate the German command about the true intentions of the Soviet troops. As a result, the Red Army carried out offensive operations on the flanks of the Soviet-German front, as a result of which the Wehrmacht was forced to regroup large forces from the central sector. Moreover, as captured documents testify, the Hitlerite command came to the conclusion that the Red Army would first undertake an operation to destroy the blockaded group in Kurlyan FDI, and then go on the offensive in East Prussia. At the same time, an offensive by Soviet troops was expected in southern Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and on the central sector of the front, from Warsaw to the Sandomierz bridgehead, only restrictive actions were expected. From this assessment of the situation, a grouping was determined

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ka of the German fascist armies and prepared the defense. True, at the beginning of January the Hitlerite command managed to establish that the main forces of the Soviet Army were concentrating in the direction of Berlin. However, in the time remaining before the beginning of the offensive of the Soviet troops, it could no longer take significant countermeasures. A blow of unprecedented force fell upon the enemy. "Europe has not known anything like this since the fall of the Roman Empire," noted the former Wehrmacht General F. Melleptin.

Active camouflage measures were also carried out at the fronts. At the direction of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front was supposed to show the preparation of a false operation in order to attract the attention of enemy reconnaissance, and if possible, then part of the enemy forces. The most extreme section on the left wing, at the junction with the 1st Ukrainian Front, was chosen as the area for the false operation. Issues of camouflage, as Marshal G.K. Zhukov, were agreed with the General Staff and approved by the Headquarters. He decided to show in the wrong direction the concentration of armored and mechanized formations, general military formations, a large number of artillery, aviation, engineering troops, as well as increased rail and road transport. For this purpose, about a thousand models of tanks and self-propelled guns, hundreds of models of vehicles were built. This mass of "tanks" and "cars" was given part of the radio stations of the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies, which were well known to the enemy due to their specific work.

Several dozens of specially allocated standing tanks and vehicles marked the movement of armored and mechanized troops. Engineer troops built new bridges, repaired old

rye, equipped and corrected the delivery routes.

To demonstrate the concentration of aviation, several hundred models of aircraft were used, and to "revive" them - dozens of combat aircraft. Were by

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air hubs were built, aerial reconnaissance and aerial photography were intensively carried out in the tactical and operational zone of the enemy. All this was demonstrated to the enemy sequentially, in different places, according to a previously developed plan for regrouping and concentration of troops, in order to give him a complete impression of the reality of the actions of the Soviet troops.

As a result, the fascist German command was convinced that a major offensive operation was being prepared in this area. It regrouped the tank and motorized divisions to the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, somewhat weakening the defenses in the direction of the actual main attack. During the transition of the Soviet troops to the offensive, these divisions fell under the double detour of the flank groupings of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts.

In the center of the 1st Belorussian Front, where a real offensive operation was being prepared, defensive work was demonstrated. All railway echelons with tanks and artillery on the way to the rear of the army were disguised as transporting hay, building material. Echelons for unloading were delivered only at night or during heavy fogs. After the artillery was unloaded, the tanks were immediately withdrawn to previously prepared areas. The tracks of the tank tracks were masked until dawn, the empty railway was driven away and dispersed in the rear of the front. Troops were brought up to the front at night, bypassing large settlements. The engineering equipment of the initial area for the offensive was also produced only at night, and before dawn everything that had been done was carefully camouflaged. The quality of the camouflage was checked by flying over the area by staff officers on airplanes.

The commandant service and the regulatory service were well organized. Before dawn, all movement of troops ceased, with the exception of individual vehicles. Delivered supplies, transport, artillery traction and so on - everything was buried in the ground and carefully camouflaged.

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To keep in the strictest secrecy the preparation of the operation

walkie-talkies, the development of all plans at the headquarters of the armies and the front was carried out by a strictly limited circle. No written documents were given to anyone, only verbal orders were given. * The directive from the front to the armies on the offensive was given a few days before the start of the operation. The commanders of the formations assigned tasks to the commanders of the units orally 4-5 days before the offensive. Battalion and company commanders were familiarized with combat missions 2-3 days in advance, platoon commanders 24 hours in advance, and soldiers and sergeants several hours before the start of the attack.

Air defense units were only allowed to open light fire on enemy aircraft there. It was forbidden to fire at single and small groups, as well as at aircraft flying even at medium altitudes. Approximately the same operational camouflage measures were taken on the right flank of the front in order to give the enemy the impression that large forces were being concentrated against Warsaw.

The operational camouflage carried out on the 1st Belorussian Front turned out to be quite effective. The command managed to hide from the enemy the scale and the beginning of the offensive operation and achieve operational surprise. In his speech at the military scientific conference at the GSVG in November-December 1945, Marshal G.K. Zhukov, speaking about the plan to deceive the enemy implemented in the Warsaw-Poznan operation, noted: "We managed this thanks to the presence of a well-developed and well-executed plan to deceive the enemy, a camouflage plan ... in this operation we managed to implement a deception plan, a camouflage plan, and, as experience has shown, we have achieved surprise. On the 1st Ukrainian Front, operational camouflage was carried out on the left wing, where the main attack was simulated. The plan of the operation provided for breaking through the enemy defenses from the Sandomierz bridgehead and delivering the main blow in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front in the general direction of Khmilnik, Radomsko in order to defeat the enemy's Kielce-Radom grouping.

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On December 21, 1944, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev, having decided to misinform the enemy about the actual concentration of troops and the place of the breakthrough of the front, ordered: "Before the start of active operations to break through the enemy's defenses, create a false concentration of the tank army and the tank corps on the left wing of the front, in the sector of the 60 Army ... To carry out operational camouflage by the army in the shortest possible time (no more than 5-7 days), for which purpose to involve the 4th Guards Tank Corps for 2-3 days with its subsequent castling in the area of actual concentration, as well as leaving models of tanks and artillery in the area

nah temporary location of this tank corps. Operational camouflage measures must be distinguished by exceptional plausibility, which requires the involvement of tank formations for short periods, using their passing movement. The demonstration of false concentrations must be combined and directly connected with real concentration.

These instructions of Marshal I.S. Konev formed the basis of the plan for operational camouflage of the front, worked out by the headquarters together with the commanders of the military branches (special troops) and the heads of services.

In order for the false maneuver to bring the desired results, that is, for the enemy to believe in the reality of the powerful group being created in the Tarnow-Krakow direction, it was necessary to organize operational camouflage measures with exceptional plausibility. The camouflage maneuver plan, developed by the chief of staff of the front's engineering troops and approved by the commander, was to demonstrate the concentration of two tank armies (3-4 tank corps) in the Dembica area. The false concentration was to take place during the period of real concentration of troops on the bridgehead. To ensure the plausibility of ongoing activities

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The plan provided for the withdrawal of a real tank corps to the left flank of the front for a period of 2-3 days, with its subsequent covert castling into the area of actual concentration. In the place of the departing corps in the area of false concentration, models of tanks remained.

At the same time, the plan provided for a demonstration of the withdrawal of part of the forces from the bridgehead to the left flank of the front. The organization of the false concentration was entrusted to the commander of the 60th Army and his headquarters. In connection with bad weather, which almost ruled out the activity of German reconnaissance aircraft, some adjustments were made to the plan, which amounted to intensifying measures to disorient enemy agents. The 16th Assault Engineer Brigade, two battalions of the 59th Engineer Brigade, one rifle regiment, one artillery regiment and one tank battalion were brought in to carry out the work to implement the plan. By the beginning of the demonstration, 400 models of tanks, 500 models of vehicles and 1000 models of guns were prepared.

To simulate the leadership of a false concentration, the headquarters of the tank army and the headquarters of the tank corps were formed. The army headquarters was headed by the head of the operations department of the 60th army. The headquarters had in their

at the disposal of the radio facility, received field mail numbers and means of communication. The intensification of activity on the front line of defense was expressed in regular reconnaissance of the enemy defense in the zone of the 60th Army by groups of officers specially created for this. A great deal of work in the false concentration area was carried out by the "lodgers". They traveled around the area, distributed plots for the deployment of troops, warned the population about the impending evacuation in connection with the deployment of a significant number of troops in settlements. The local population was involved in the widely planned road construction. Column paths were laid. Roads and column roads were equipped with all the necessary road signs and signs.

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On December 27, the 4th Guards Tank Corps arrived in the false concentration area. The movement took place during daylight hours. On the night of December 29, the corps went through the forests to the bridgehead. On the same night, models of tanks, artillery pieces, and motor vehicles were installed in the places of his temporary parking. The layout area was guarded by infantry. Fires were lit every night at various points in the vast region, and real field kitchens were used. Loud-speaking installations were used to simulate the movement of tanks to and within the concentration areas, transmitting sound recordings of the movement of tanks and vehicles. On the approaches to the false concentration area, real "stragglers" tanks were set up, simulating breakdowns and repairs. The roads leading to the "concentration area" were blocked by barriers, which were guarded in the form of tankers. A dozen real tanks furrowed roads and fields at night, leaving caterpillar tracks leading to the same area.

False concentration was facilitated by the training sessions and shooting of the 59th Army, which at that time was located in the rear area of the 60th Army. The demonstration of the transfer of units from the Sandomierz bridgehead was provided by round-the-clock traffic to the rear through the false concentration area. At night, driving along this route was allowed with lit headlights. According to the concentration plan, part of the artillery stationed in the zone of the 60th Army was transferred to the bridgehead. At the site of its former location, 550 mock guns were installed with the appropriate equipment and security.

From Zpo on January 6, the withdrawal of artillery to position areas was simulated. The necessary work was carried out to equip firing positions. A little earlier than this, from January 1 to 4, shooting was carried out for benchmarks and targets. 80 nomadic guns (including

24 guns of caliber 152-203 mm) and a large number of mortars used for this purpose were made in

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sighting period 2950 shots. In the last days before the operation, officer reconnaissance groups intensified their work, night reconnaissance searches became more frequent, and three days before the operation, when reconnaissance actions were taken on the entire front, a reconnaissance search was organized in the 60th Army zone by large forces.

A large amount of work was carried out during the preparatory period. With the help of the local population and road units, routes were prepared for the movement of tanks. A specially assigned group of officers, dressed in tank uniforms, reconnoitered these routes. She gave instructions about the need to repair one or another part of the route, and when communicating with the population, she carried out misinformation.

The road department of the army, which prepared the routes, was not informed about the actual purpose of these events. The work was carried out as usual in preparation for the offensive. Pits and funnels were filled in on the roads, milestones and pointers were installed, bridges were repaired, and detours for caterpillar vehicles were equipped. Unloading platforms were built at Ropyice and Zavada stations.

Engineer units (army and front) produced 150 models of T-34 tanks, 100 T-34 half models from plank shields, 50 ZIS-5 models, 100 ZIS-5 half models, 480 76-mm and 120 152-mm guns. Models of tanks of a collapsible design were made from wire and burlap. On a significant part of the models, instead of burlap, thick paper of trophy earthen bags was used. The finished models were transported to the place of installation, as a rule, in the dark. For the timely and correct installation of mock-ups in each false concentration area, the senior, appointed from the officers of the engineering troops, was responsible. With him as consultants were officers - tankers and artillerymen, as well as the commander of the security and "revitalization" group.

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On January 1, the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front signaled the start of demonstrative actions. By the end of January 3, 462 models were installed in various areas: 100 tanks, 312 guns, 50 vehicles. At the same time, by placing mock-ups, the districts were "revitalized":

groups of people moved during the day, bonfires were made at night. In a number of cases, mock-ups were put up in areas where they could be well observed from the side of the roads.

Here, work on imitation and "revival" was carried out with particular scrupulousness. The locations of the mock-up equipment were carefully guarded. The imitation teams allocated for "revitalization" and protection were subordinate to the head of the district. Control over the course of the simulation was carried out by an operational group consisting of three front headquarters officers. The calculation on enemy agents was justified. On the fourth day after the installation of mock-ups, the enemy launched an artillery attack on the area south of Zavada, located 6 kilometers from the front line of defense.

On January 1-4, nomadic guns and mortars from false firing positions zeroed in on enemy targets. For this, 180 guns were involved, of which 124 were 152-mm and 203-mm, 2960 shells and mines were used. On January 3-6, the withdrawal of artillery to positional areas was simulated, firing positions were set up, and shooting continued. In total, during this time, 550 models of guns were removed and installed. Simultaneously, accurate searches were carried out in the sectors of the 336th, 148th, and 100th rifle divisions. Artillery, tank and combined-arms reconnaissance groups were involved in reconnaissance of initial and firing positions and probable directions of the main attacks in divisions.

Characteristically, the "concentration" of the tank army on the left flank of the 60th Army compelled the enemy to take retaliatory actions. He intensified reconnaissance and work on the installation of barriers in this direction, minimizing

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dug roads, bridges and settlements. Artillery increased its activity: it carried out methodical fire raids on the front line of defense, on "concentrations" of tanks. On January 10, the 344th artillery regiment, which arrived from the Western Front, took up defense in the Tarnow region, and two days later the 359th infantry division was advanced from the front line from Tarnow. In addition, Soviet intelligence discovered the advance of a large enemy formation from the Krakow region to Tarnow.

In preparation for the offensive on the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front, a partial camouflage operation was carried out in order to hide from the enemy the redeployment of two artillery divisions and two anti-tank brigades, which regrouped to another direction with the start of the offensive. The engineering troops of the 6th Army were to

to set up in a short time false artillery positions in the areas of Jozefow, Bassonia, Swieciechow, Annopol, "reviving" them with periodic volleys and single shots from wandering guns. The 62nd engineering sapper brigade prepared and installed 329 mock guns in advance. The fire regime was maintained according to the developed plan. The plan of the command was carried out, and the enemy, not discovering the redeployment of artillery formations, fired at decoy batteries, firing 105 large-caliber shells at them in three days.

In a number of sectors, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were preparing to carry out false attacks by infantry with tanks: models of tanks and infantry were set in motion with the help of a system of cables, winches and gates. This was intended to weaken the enemy's fire in the main direction of the breakthrough, to detect the batteries that had come to life after our false attack, and to refine the system of fire of the enemy defense.

False attacks were organized and carried out by the 23rd Assault Engineer Brigade, commanded by the Hero of the Soviet Union Regiment

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nickname I.P. Koryavko. The task was carried out very skillfully. When the entire system of false attack was put into action, the Nazis opened strong artillery-mortar and machine-gun fire on the positions.

Disguise was also successfully carried out on the Sandomierz bridgehead, from where the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front delivered the main blow. Prior to planning work on the preparation of areas of concentration, the headquarters of the engineering troops of the front established the conditions for camouflage, the camouflage capacity of forests and other natural masks that make it possible to covertly deploy troops and military equipment on the bridgehead, and also determined the zones viewed by the enemy. It was established that the enemy, occupying the dominating heights, could observe the actions of the troops on the front line and 5-8 kilometers in depth from it.

In order to ensure covert advancement of units and formations to their initial position for an offensive in zones overlooked by the enemy, a fragment of the main communication passages and the installation of vertical masks were planned. By the beginning of the offensive, 73 kilometers of vertical masks had been built on the bridgehead, and 121 kilometers of main communication passages had been dug.

The concentration of a huge number of troops required special measures for the effective use of ma-

skiving containers. The forest areas on the bridgehead, during their usual use, did not provide covert placement of personnel and equipment.

The covert deployment of troops along the edges of forests and along the roads was achieved by constructing vertical masks from vegetation. The masks were 100-200 meters deep into the forest, they merged with the forest and did not attract attention. Huts of poles and branches were built to shelter the horses, and earthen boxes covered with vegetation were built for vehicles and tanks. Samples of such buildings were built in every forest. To enter the forest and maneuver in it, prepare

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columned paths were laid along the clearings. To preserve the forests, commandants were appointed with the appropriate staff of rangers. Parts were assigned certain cutting areas, outside of which logging was strictly prohibited. In total, 240 kilometers of vertical masks were installed on the bridgehead, 180 kilometers of column tracks were laid along forest clearings, thorough reconnaissance and preparation of troop movement routes were carried out.

Important tasks in camouflage of troops were solved by aviation.

From the report of the lipaba of the 16th Air Army.

The arrival of new air formations was kept in deep secrecy, and there were many of them. The commanders and leaders of the aviation groups, who traveled to the front line to study the objects of operations on the battlefield, were dressed in sheepskin coats without shoulder straps and insignia. The Soviet Air Force was supposed to maintain strategic air supremacy, with concentrated strikes against the enemy, to assist the ground forces in carrying out their tasks. The 3rd Fighter Aviation Corps (commander General B.Ya. Savitsky), the 9th Attack Aviation Corps (commander General I.V. Krupsky), the 183rd Bomber Aviation division (commander Colonel M.A. Sitkin), 242nd Night Bomber Aviation Division (commander Colonel P.A. Kalinin), 1st Guards Fighter Aviation Division (commander Colonel V.V. Sukhoryabov).

False airfields were built. Aircraft models were installed on them and the movement of airfield and military equipment was imitated. In the 16th Air Army, 818 mock-ups were installed at 55 false airfields

aircraft and special vehicles. Most of the false airfields "operated" around the clock and were so plausible that the enemy was not in doubt. Before the start of the offensive, the enemy bombed them 5 times during the day and

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19 - at night and dropped 660 large-caliber bombs on them. The actual airfields were carefully camouflaged and were hardly subjected to air strikes during this period.

The military councils of the fronts took an active part in measures to achieve surprise.

Recalls a member of the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front, Lieutenant General K.F. Telegin:

"...Given that it was decided to strike at the same time in three directions, it was necessary to keep our offensive intentions and the timing of their implementation in complete secrecy. For the purpose of secrecy, all the commanders who took part in the reconnaissance search dressed in the uniform of private soldiers, familiarization with the area of the forthcoming actions, the defense system and enemy forces was carried out in small groups.

Under these conditions, it seemed to us the most important thing to keep the day of the start of the offensive secret, but not to keep it secret until the time when the commanders of the corresponding degrees had no time left to prepare for the task. For this reason, the military councils of the armies were familiarized with the order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief literally on the day it was received by the Military Council of the front, but then the information went according to the approved schedule ...

If the timing of the start of the offensive could be sufficiently reliably hidden from the enemy by observing the established procedure and terms for notifying the troops about it, then it was much more difficult to keep the offensive intentions themselves secret. It was necessary to withdraw to the initial lines, move from one place to another a total of troops of four armies, of which one was tank, to accept replenishment, new divisions, new army, tank, artillery, aviation corps, to provide a rapidly growing fleet of vehicles with fuel, bearing in mind that one refueling of cars

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front by the beginning of the operation reached 20 thousand tons, and at least ten such filling stations should have been accumulated.

In a word, it was not possible to completely hide the movement of such masses of people and military equipment from the enemy. And the only way out of the situation was the experience-tested method of operational camouflage through a system of disinformation measures developed in advance.

During the preparation and implementation of the Byelorussian operation, the personnel of the front troops accumulated considerable experience in carrying out various kinds of camouflage measures, but now the difficulty was that the concentration of troops had to be carried out on the relatively modest areas of the captured parade grounds...

I will mention in some way a novelty, the application of which gave the most tangible results. We are talking about loud-speaking installations - Moscow State University and OGU, which our political agencies used to carry out explanatory work among the personnel of the enemy troops. These powerful installations were put forward, as they were supposed to, to the very front line. The operators turned them on at full volume and broadcast musical works. As I remember, on the Magnushevsky bridgehead, Blanter's song "Katyusha" was especially popular with German soldiers. During the days of preparation and pulling up troops to the front line, the Germans shouted through their loud-speaking devices: "Rus, come on, Katyusha!" The order in this case was carried out without delay. And while the enemy soldiers were listening to how the Katyusha "came ashore", the other Katyushas crossed the river and, under the cover of night darkness, the notes, not detected by the enemy, went to the left bank, took up firing positions on the bridgehead.

The same loudspeakers of ours were also used to imitate the movement of tank columns. One gasoline engine, adapted with skill and creative imagination, could work for about half an hour for a tank regiment, creating in the near depths

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the battle formations of our units, such a roar - either covering the entire listening space, then fading as the "removal of passing tanks" - that the enemy often tried to illuminate the location of the "groped" column or opened fire on the area from which the troops were prudently withdrawn. Our artillery did not respond very energetically and economically to these raids, creating additional noise, under the cover of which, in the darkness of the night, tank troops were withdrawn to the bridgehead.

In the midst of preparations for the offensive, the Military Council was forced to take additional measures against the leakage of information through the front line. Separate attempts by the enemy agents left in our rear to infiltrate the troops moving to the front line were thwarted in order to, after collecting the necessary information, then cross the front line. The Military Council ordered, in particular, to establish a continuous duty of commanders and political workers in the trenches of the forward edge, to create an atmosphere of careful observation, which excluded the defection of enemy agents to the enemy, the transfer of information to him about the beginning of our offensive.

Considering the presence of fascist German agents in the rear of the front troops, the active intelligence work carried out by the underground groups of the Home Army, which, in the end, worked for our enemies, as well as the inevitability of daily contacts between soldiers and commanders with the local population, military councils and The liturgical bodies of the front and the armies launched a particularly active work at that time to instill in the personnel a sense of high revolutionary vigilance ... "

Recalls General K.F. Telegin (continued):

"... I must say that during the period from November 1, 1944 to January 15, 1945, 137 military intelligence officers were detained and arrested, of which 26 were at the forefront, 41 people were dropped by planes in the rear of the front, and 9 agents with radio stations man left behind

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the enemy during the retreat - 31 people in the process of combing the area - 30 people.

Through the line of headquarters and commanders of communications units under the general supervision of the head of the communications troops of the front, General P.Ya. Maksimenko, a whole system of camouflage measures was organized with the involvement, first of all, of the radio stations of the formations.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

On September 27, 1939, at the initiative of a group of career officers, a military organization was created, the Service for the Zvytsentstvo Poland - SZP (Service for the Victory of Poland), which was soon transformed into Zwenzek valki zbrojny - 383 (Union of Armed Struggle), uniting in its ranks a significant number of groups and organizations, spontaneously arisen on the territory of Poland. On February 14, 1942, on the basis of the 3VZ, the Home Army (AK) was created, an underground military organization in Poland, which was an instrument

loan from the Polish government in exile in London. The bulk of the AK command staff was staffed by officers and non-commissioned officers of the former Polish army.

In 1940-1944, part of the ranks of the Khlopsky Battalions, the VRN military organization, the Socialist Fighting Organization, the Secret Military Organization, and the Polish Secret Army were included in the 3VZ-AK. The Craiova Army was neither organizational nor politically unified. By the summer of 1944, it consisted of 250-350 thousand people, had an extensive propaganda apparatus. Its propaganda was directed against the Polish Workers' Party, as well as against the Soviet Union.

The tactics of military operations of the AK proceeded from the concepts of "two enemies" and changed depending on the political situation. In 1942, the Home Army carried out the so-called small sabotage (posting leaflets, hanging national flags, etc.). By the spring of 1943, the Polish bourgeois centers, fearful of losing influence on the Polish people, were compelled, under pressure from below, to withdraw the slogan "stand with weapons at your feet" and replace it with the slogan of limited struggle. At the end of 1943, the AK main headquarters developed the Buzha (Storm) plan. He envisaged that as the Red Army advanced across the Polish soil, units of the Home Army, coming out of the underground, would attack the retreating Nazis directly on the approaches to the Soviet front, which would allow the units of the Home Army to capture certain regions of the country before the arrival of the Red Army.

Under the terms of the camouflage measures, the radio stations went on the air, located at a considerable distance from the "attached" to them.

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troops, giving the enemy the impression of being relocated to a new location, and fell silent when they arrived in the zone of their actual location. From time to time, in a semi-encrypted form (the so-called clerk), messages were transmitted containing data that misinformed the enemy.

All of the above and many other measures taken to conceal from the enemy the true intentions of our troops yielded positive results. The blow delivered at the time set by the Supreme High Command came as a complete surprise to the enemy. As captured enemy officers showed, in the camp of the enemy, the overwhelming majority of generals were inclined to believe that after reaching the Vistula, the Soviet troops, exhausted by a long offensive, would try to spend the winter on the defensive. The most interesting thing was that the basis for such conclusions was ... our newspapers - army and divisional, which, again, in order to mask the preparatory measures, launched a rather active campaign in their pages to prepare for winter, create funds in the trenches troop shelters

from the cold, the construction of warm dugouts and even the procurement of fuel with the expectation of a long stay in an equipped housing.

Says a member of the Military Council of the 5th shock army, Lieutenant General F.E. Bokov:

"... On December 27, an order came to the army headquarters, hidden from the enemy, from January 1 to January 10, to regroup and reach the bridgehead. The next day, the Military Council approved a detailed plan for concentrating army troops on the bridgehead: it provided for the procedure for reaching the Vistula crossings separately for each rifle division, artillery regiment, or reinforcement unit. Such planning was caused by the limited approaches to the river and crossings over it, as well as the need to hide from the enemy the advance of the army to the starting area. In order to keep the objectives of the regrouping secret, the army commander ordered that no written orders for the march be given, and that the routes of movement be communicated to formations and units for only one transition. The radio stations were sealed and it was forbidden to use them, all movements were made only at night, the strictest camouflage measures were observed.

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The main feature of the regrouping was that formations and units were to be transported to the bridgehead only over two bridges. This required a good organization of air defense of the crossings and a clear commandant service on them. You moving to the crossings, the troops made marches only at night. Then, in observance of all camouflage measures, more than 100 thousand soldiers crossed over two bridges to the bridgehead in the dark, a significant amount of artillery, tanks and vehicles, huge stocks of ammunition, fuel, food and many other military supplies were transferred there.

The exceptionally strict control over the discipline of the movement of troops and military equipment at night contributed to the extremely precise, I would say, skillful conduct of such a concentration. Not only the commanders of formations and the apparatus of the field administration of the army, but also the members of the Military Council, the deputy commanders of the army, still went out to the front roads, to the crossings, checked the organization and camouflage of the movement of troops, and, if necessary, resolutely put things in order.

The 5th strike successfully and within the specified time took up positions. As it was later established from captured documents and testimonies of prisoners, before the start of our offensive, the enemy did not discover that on

bridgehead crossed the new army.

The difficulty of achieving surprise was expressed in the fact that the enemy expected the offensive of the troops of the fronts, primarily from the bridgeheads. Marshal I.S. In this regard, Konev noted at one of the meetings: "It is not clear to anyone that if one side has captured such a large bridgehead, and even on such a large river as the Vistula, then a new powerful blow should be expected from here ... So the place our future breakthrough was no secret to the enemy."

Despite the extensive camouflage measures, naturally, the thought arose whether it would be possible to completely

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hide from the enemy preparations for the offensive? Will the enemy open the preparation and take appropriate countermeasures? Based on this, the command of the fronts and armies decided to increase the possibility of achieving surprise by using new methods of making a breakthrough. It was taken into account that the enemy would probably withdraw troops to the second position in advance in order to avoid heavy losses during the period of artillery preparation. He used this technique in some previous operations (for example, in Lvov-Sandomierz in 1944). It was also taken into account that the fascist troops were expecting a lengthy artillery preparation, which would be carried out during daylight hours. At this time, the personnel of the enemy and most of the military equipment will be in dugouts and shelters, and with the start of the attack, they will take up their combat positions to repel it.

Having thoroughly studied the daily routine of the fascist troops defending against the bridgeheads, the commanders of the troops of the front decided, with the approval of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, to introduce new elements into the organization of the artillery offensive and reconnaissance in force.

On the 1st Belorussian Front, it was decided to start artillery preparation at dawn with a fire raid lasting 25 minutes, after which they would go on the attack with forward battalions and support them with a single barrage of fire. The main forces of the divisions went over to the offensive after the advanced battalions, building on their success. If the forward battalions did not reach their intended target, a 70-minute artillery preparation was supposed.

The issue was solved in a very original way on the 1st Ukrainian Front, where the commander of its troops decided to start the operations of the advanced battalions a few hours before the start of the offensive of the main forces. Between the attack

red battalions and artillery preparation for the offensive there was a period of time sufficient to adjust the artillery fire and advance

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forward observation posts. Since there was evidence that the enemy determined the moment of the start of our attack by the sounds of tank engines, a false attack by infantry with tanks on the entire front during artillery preparation was added to the action of the forward battalions. For a false attack, each battalion of the first echelon was allocated: one rifle platoon, two tanks, one self-propelled guns, one artillery battery and a significant number of mock-up tanks. All these measures were intended to mislead the enemy, force him to open his system of fire, withdraw his manpower from shelters and thereby ensure the effectiveness of the first artillery fire.

The concentration of troops and military equipment basically ended two or three days before the offensive. On the parade grounds they were placed in high density. Measures were taken to prevent the enemy from discovering the concentration of troops and from revealing the intention and grouping of the troops of the front. To this end, the troops that had previously defended the bridgeheads were ordered to remain in the first trenches. Their change was planned to be carried out on the night before going on the offensive. Any movement on the bridgeheads, including along the trenches, was strictly forbidden, especially in the daytime. The fulfillment of these requirements by the troops was strictly monitored by the commandant's posts. Tanks and self-propelled guns advanced to their starting positions at night, with their headlights extinguished. During their advance, specially designated aircraft were in the air above the bridgeheads, which jammed the movement of tanks and self-propelled guns.

Thus, in preparation for the Vistula-Oder operation, the fronts carried out a number of operational camouflage measures. The Soviet command tried to hide the place, time and direction of attacks. New methods of conducting combat operations, original methods of using artillery, tanks, and reconnaissance in force were chosen. Operational camouflage measures were supposed to increase the factor of achieving surprise. Thanks to the measures taken, the Soviet command in a certain

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To some extent concealed the concept of the operation, the number of forces and means involved, and the timing of the transition of the fronts to the offensive. Confirmation of this conclusion is Hitler's statement on December 24, 1944 that "the Russians are not going to move into a serious attack from the Vistula line."

retreat", as well as a similar plan by Hitler on January 9, 1945. It is also noteworthy that German intelligence determined the composition of the 1st Belorussian Front at 31 instead of the existing 68 divisions. It should also be borne in mind that the Wehrmacht officers captured in the first three days of the Vistula-Oder operation, as follows from their questionnaires, are unanimous in their opinion "about the unexpectedness of the strikes inflicted by the Soviet troops."

Chapter 5

BREAKTHROUGH ENEMY DEFENSE. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WARSAW- RADOMA, KELETISK AND OSTROVETSK-OPATUV GROUP OF THE ENEMY

During the fighting in the Vistula-Oder operation, which lasted from January 12 to February 3, 1945, the Soviet troops solved a number of interrelated tasks.

On January 12, 1945, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front began the Sandomierz-Silesian offensive operation, which included two main stages. The first of them ended on January 18 with a breakthrough of the enemy's main line of defense and the withdrawal of front troops along the Piotrkow (Petrokov), Radomsko, Czestochowa, Krakow line, that is, to a depth of 140-150 km.

At this stage of the operation, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front interacted with the 38th Army (commanded by Colonel General K.S. Moskalenko), the 4th Ukrainian Front, which was tasked as the main task to ensure a junction with the 1st Ukrainian Front, part of the forces attacking Krakow from the south.

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front went on the offensive on January 14. On the first day of the Warsaw-Poznan operation, the troops of the central group, operating from the Magnushevsky bridgehead, and the southern group, advancing from the Puławy bridgehead, broke through the main German defense line to a depth of 12-18 km. On the same day, in accordance with the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, on the offensive

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'Liberation of Poland. January 12 - February 3, 1945

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troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front crossed. The 65th Army (commanded by Colonel-General P.I. Batov) and the 20th Army attacked the enemy from the Sirotky bridgehead.

(Commander Colonel-General V.S. Popov). By their subsequent actions along the northern bank of the Vistula, they firmly secured the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front. On January 15, the northern grouping of the 1st Belorussian Front, having completed the breakthrough of the enemy defenses on the Vistula, began to destroy the Warsaw-Radom grouping of the enemy. On January 17, Warsaw, the capital of Poland, was liberated. As a result, the strikes inflicted on three operational directions merged into one on a strip of 230 km.

The content of the second stage of the Sandomierz-Silesian operation was determined by the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command of January 17, 1945, which formulated the requirement to strike at Breslau, force the Oder and capture the Silesian industrial region. The result of the subsequent actions of the troops of the front was the liberation of Krakow, Kamin, the encirclement and destruction of the enemy south of Leisno, the exit to Breslau (Wroclaw), the capture of Oppeln, Auschwitz and Katowice - the center of the Silesian industrial region, the forcing of a number of sections of the Oder (Odra) and the capture several bridgeheads on its western coast.

The second stage of the Warsaw-Poznan offensive operation lasted from 18 to 24 January. Its content was battles and battles to develop a breakthrough in enemy defenses and reach the fourth Poznań defensive line. During the seven days of the offensive, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front advanced 230 km westward, reached the Poznan defensive line of the enemy, broke through it, crossed the Warta River and surrounded the fortress of Poznan, the most important communications and defense center in the Berlin direction.

During the third stage of the operation (from January 25 to February 3), the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front decided to break through the border areas of Germany, you

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going to the river Oder (Odra), mastering bridgeheads on its western bank. By the end of February 3, the entire eastern bank of the Oder (Odra) from Zeden to Unrustadt was cleared of the enemy. Soon the fortresses Schneidemuhl (Pim) and Poznan fell.

So, January 12, 1945 - the first day of the Vistula-Oder operation.

HISTORICAL
INFORMATION On January

12, 1813, the medal "To the Participant of the Patriotic War of 1812" was established.

On January 12, 1878, during the Russian-Turkish war, troops under

the leadership of General I.V. Gurko captured the Philip Fortress Paul.

On January 12, 1881, during the second Akhal-Teke expedition led by General M.D. Skobelev, a detachment of Russian troops, after breaking through the fortress wall and artillery bombardment, rushed to storm the Geok-Tepe (Detil-Tepe) fortress. The seemingly impregnable fortress fell.

On January 12, 1943, Operation Iskra of the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts began in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. Their actions were coordinated by representatives of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command Marshal of the Soviet Union K.E. Voroshilov and Army General G.K. Zhukov. The blockade of Leningrad was broken.

The breakthrough of the enemy defense by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front began at dawn. According to eyewitnesses, there was thick fog, freezing, drizzling light rain, turning into sleet.

The commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal I.S. Konev:

"In the night I went to the bridgehead, to the observation post of the front. It was a small farm located on the edge of the forest, in close proximity to the front line. In one of the rooms, a window faced directly to the west, from which one could observe. In addition, there was a small skyscraper nearby, on which we installed a monitoring and control system. Observatory point, advanced in direct

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'Soviet troops are fighting on the outskirts of Warsaw. January 1945

proximity to battle formations and provided with all means of communication and control, was the most suitable place for this. We arrived at the observation post together with Generals Krainyukov and Kalchenko, members of the Military Council, and General Sokolovsky, Chief of Staff of the Front.

Exactly at five in the morning, after a short but powerful artillery strike, the forward battalions went over to the attack and quickly captured the first trench of the enemy defense. Already from the very first reports, it became clear that the enemy had not retreated anywhere, that he was here, on the spot, in the zone of influence of all the artillery strikes we had planned. The artillery strike, for all its brevity, was so strong that it gave the enemy the impression of the beginning of a general artillery attack.

preparation. Mistaking the actions of the advanced battalions for the general offensive of our troops, the Nazis tried with all their firepower to stop it.

This is what we were counting on. The forward battalions, having occupied the first trench, lay down between the first and second.

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It is at this moment on artillery preparation began. It lasted an hour and seven minutes. And it was so powerful that, judging by a number of captured documents, it seemed to the enemy that it lasted at least five hours.

After the end of the artillery preparation, when the infantry, together with the escort tanks, rushed forward, I drove around the area of the breakthrough. Everything around was literally plowed up, especially in the direction of the main attack of the armies of Zhadov, Koroteev and Pukhov. Everything is littered, covered up, upside down. It's a joke to say that here, for one kilometer of the front, not counting cannons and small-caliber mortars, two hundred and fifty - two hundred and eighty, and in some places even three hundred guns were fired at the enemy. "Power!" as the soldiers say.

The 3rd Guards Army of Gordov (part of the forces), the 13th Army of Pukhov, the 52nd Koroteev, the 5th Guards Zhadov, during the first day of fighting advanced to a depth of fifteen to twenty kilometers and, breaking through the main German defense line, expanded breakthrough towards the flanks to the left and right from forty to sixty kilometers.

The enemy, as we believed, intended to strike at the first echelon of the advancing armies even before our tank forces entered the breakthrough - to strike, crush and prevent this entry. But the essence of our plan was to prevent them from doing so. By that moment, when the fascist German tank and motorized divisions prepared for the strike, the advanced units of our tank armies appeared in their zone of deployment. The entry of tank armies into the huge gates pierced for them took place calmly, painlessly and org.

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lowered. And the enemy, sticking his tank

troops from the area south of Kielce, ran into our tanks."

Colonel General A.S., commander of the 5th Guards Army, shares his impressions of breaking through the enemy defenses. Zhadov:

"At 5 o'clock in the morning, long before dawn, artillery with specially allocated artillery units carried out a powerful 7-minute fire raid along the enemy's front line, and the forward battalions rushed to the attack. Quick and decisive action allowed most of the forward battalions to capture the first, and in some areas the second German trenches. However, soon the enemy began to offer strong resistance with rifle-machine-gun and artillery fire from the depths of his defense. The advance of the units of the forward battalions slowed down, and with the dawn it completely stopped. Only on the left flank did the forward battalion of the 15th Guards Rifle Division manage to break into the enemy's third trench.

In the course of the advance of the forward battalions and from the testimonies of the captured prisoners, it was established that the enemy was completely on the defensive and that he had the impression that our night attack had bogged down. The combat operations of the forward battalions also made it possible to liquidate the enemy's outposts, to refine his system of fire, to make passages in the barriers in front of the front line of defense, and to covertly take up starting positions for an attack by the main forces of the army.

At 10 o'clock in the morning, as envisaged by the plan, a powerful artillery preparation began on the entire front, which lasted 110 minutes. We watched with great satisfaction the work of our wonderful artillery, and especially the volleys of rocket artillery, which rained down hundreds of tons of deadly metal on the head of the enemy. Thirty minutes before the end of the artillery preparation from the battalions of the first echelon

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Artillery preparation during the breakthrough of the defense of the Nazi troops on the Vistula. January 1945

pre-allocated platoons, imitating the attack of the main forces, went on the offensive. In order not to cause doubt among the Nazis, the platoons were reinforced with two tanks and one self-propelled artillery mount. In addition, the fighters skillfully made models of tanks and riflemen's units. As soon as the guardsmen of these platoons went on the attack, our infantry, which remained in the trenches, opened a strong rifle-

machine gun fire. The attack was supported by part of the artillery.

When the second position of the enemy defense was broken through, it was time to join the battle of the 31st and 4th Guards Tank Corps. Using their blow, the rifle regiments brought their second echelons into battle and, together with the tankers, completed the breakthrough of the enemy's main line of defense.

On the night of January 13, the infantry and tank formations of the forward detachments and the second echelons of the regiments stubbornly continued their offensive, trying to cut the Busko-Zdrój-Chervony highway. Having advanced 5-6 km, they reached the Nida River in the morning, not allowing the Nazis to gain a foothold on its western bank. Since morning

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On January 13, after a short artillery preparation, the army troops again went forward and by the end of the second day of the operation they had completed the defeat of the enemy grouping defending the tactical defense zone, captured many prisoners and trophies. Particularly stubborn battles once again returned for the large defensive center of Busko-Zdrój, located in the center of the army's offensive zone. Units of the 9th Guards Airborne Division under the command of Colonel P.I. Shumeev, but their movement was halted by heavy fire and a counterattack by the enemy. At the same time, the 13th Guards Rifle Division, commanded by Guards Colonel V.N. Komarov, bypassed the stronghold from the north. An advantageous covering position was created for an attack on the flanks and rear of the enemy. Continuing the offensive with the main forces to the west, the division commanders allocated part of the forces to destroy the German garrison in Busko-Zdrój, which, after a powerful fire raid, attacked this stronghold from different directions and, as a result of a tense battle, captured it.

Colonel General D.D., Commander of the 4th Tank Army, shares his impressions. Lelyushenko:

"Early in the morning of January 12, together with a member of the Military Council, General V.G. Gulyaev and a group of army staff officers took their places at the observation post.

Exactly at 10 o'clock. artillery preparation began in the morning.
Recent Silence

instantly changed

local thunder, rumble, crackling and whistling. For dozens

kilometers along the front and into the depths, shells and mines burst, raising sultans of smoke, D.D. Lelyushenko

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fire and mud mixed with snow. The ground shook, the battlefield turned black. Hundreds of rockets streaked the sky. In 1 hour 50 min. followed by the transfer of the fire shaft along the depth of the enemy's defense, and after it the attack of our infantry and tanks of direct support began. The forest, where there was an enemy defense, was literally cut off like an oblique by fragments of shells. At 12 o'clock. 35 min. the infantry of the first echelon captured the first position of the enemy. I give the command to the forward detachments of the 4th Panzer Army to follow along with the infantry.

From the powerful blow of our artillery, many fascist soldiers were mad with fear. Soon, captured fascists appeared on our NP. Many of them were taken in the trenches in a deranged state, just half crazy. It was impossible to get anything intelligible from them at that moment. "Ales kaput, Hitler kaput," they said, scared to death. After some time, having come to his senses, the chief corporal said: "I have never experienced such horror. It was real hell. A continuous howl reigned in the trenches. The wounded screamed for help, but no one gave it to them. After suffering the horror, I surrendered."

The commander of the troops of the front gave the order to bring the army. At the same time, the enemy committed his operational reserves to the battle. He intended to attack the 16th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions from the side of Cologne to the south with the 17th Panzer Division from the side of Khmilnik to the north to break through the Soviet tank formations that had broken through in the area south of Kielce, and then hit the infantry and restore position. But the enemy failed to carry out his plan.

The main forces of the 4th Panzer Army, introduced into the gap in the offensive zone of the 13th Army (commanded by Colonel General N.P. Pukhov), overtook the advanced units of their infantry in the middle of the day and, developing the offensive, on the outskirts of the first rear the defensive line of the Germans met with the left-flank units of the 17th German Panzer Division.

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knocking down tank barriers, repelling numerous but scattered counterattacks by small enemy tank groups, subunits and units of the 4th Panzer Army moved forward. By the evening of January 1, the first rear

the German defensive line on the offensive front of the tank army was broken through. As a result of the fighting, part of the forces of the 17th Panzer Division was cut off from its main forces, which fought with the 3rd Guards Tank Army in the Khmilnik area, and pushed back to the north. At that time, units of the 16th Panzer Division were hastily advancing from the Kielce region to help the 17th Panzer Division.

By the end of the day, the 4th Panzer Army began fighting with the advanced units of the German 16th Panzer Division. The right advanced detachment of the army went into the gap between the enemy's battle formations, crossed the river. Charna Nida and went to the river. Bobzha at Koval's. By the end of the day, the left forward detachment, having bypassed parts of the 16th Panzer Division from the south, advanced to the river. Nida. In connection with the appearance of large German tank forces from the direction of Kielce, the attention of the 4th Panzer Army was now focused on the fight against this German tank grouping.

The battles of the 3rd Guards Tank Army (commanded by Colonel General P.S. Rybalko) with the aim of breaking through the first rear defensive line of the Germans were even more intense. From morning until evening, units of the German 17th Panzer Division, suffering heavy losses, fought stubbornly to hold their positions, apparently hoping to hold them until the main forces of the 24th Panzer Corps approached. However, the units of the 16th Panzer, and after it the 20th Motorized Division, which advanced from the Kielce area, were attacked by the 4th Panzer Army and were unable to alleviate the situation of the 17th Panzer Division. She was isolated. Its situation was complicated by the fact that the forward detachments of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, after they had reached the rear line the night before, taking advantage of surprise and the ensuing darkness, penetrated the rear defense line and by the morning of January 13 reached the river. Nida. On the same day they forsiro

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bring it down, seized bridgeheads and prepared crossings for the main forces.

The main forces of the army at that time continued to fight with the 17th Panzer Division of the Germans in the Khmelnik area and to the north of it. By the end of the day, the joint efforts of units of the 3rd Guards Tank and 52nd Armies (including the 152nd Tank Brigade) took a powerful German resistance center - the city of Khmelnik, which constituted the main support of the first rear defensive line of the Germans in the direction of the main hit. With the fall of Khmilnik, the remnants of the defeated units of the 17th Panzer Division ceased resistance and, under the blows of the Soviet troops, began to retreat to Kielce to join up with the main forces of the 24th Panzer Corps.

On the morning of January 14, the troops of the 1st

Belorussian front.

Tells a member of the Military Council of the front, Lieutenant General K.F. Telegin:

"A few hours before the start of the offensive on the night of January 14, the Military Council of the front in full force left for the Magnushevsky bridgehead. It was dark and not windy. A thick fog hung over the river. Into the night

Artillerymen are firing at the Poznań Fortress. February 1945

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In the silence, the melody and words of the song about Katyusha, impatiently waiting for her lover, were carried far and wide, transmitted by Moscow State University and OSU. At the crossing, we had to linger a bit - this time the brigades of the 1st Guards Tank Army of General M.E. were crossing to the already familiar musical accompaniment. Katukov. Thus, the withdrawal of troops to the bridgehead was completed on time.

Upon arrival at the bridgehead, the front commander raised a question for discussion, which was evident from everything; had occupied him for more than a day and now demanded a clear and unambiguous answer: does the enemy know about the day and hour of our offensive or not? It is clear that the success of the offensive largely depended on the correct answer. Perhaps, remembering the predawn minutes at the command post in the village of Svoboda near Kursk, when the issue of a preemptive artillery strike on the battle formations of enemy units prepared for the offensive was being decided, Marshal G.K. Zhukov walked heavily around the cramped room of the darkened observation post and said, as always definitely and firmly putting the words in their places:

- If they found out, then, naturally, they will immediately withdraw their troops from the front line to the second line of trenches, wait until we release all the ammunition prepared for artillery preparation into the white light, and then return to their abandoned trenches and meet our troops, saving completely their manpower ... Well, then everything that should be expected in such a development of events!

"After all, the situation is verifiable! - said V.I. Kazakov quietly, but so that everyone heard him. - Reconnaissance in force!

"Or, better to say," Zhukov said, as if supporting Kazakov's idea, but, as it immediately turned out,

putting forward their own, - the offensive by small

forces after a short artillery preparation. This is where everything will become clear. And when it turns out - all forces into battle and a breakthrough!

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Satisfied with his decision
and the fact that it was immediately
and unconditionally supported by
all with the same unanimity with
which indisputable and reliable
proposals are supported, G.K.
Zhukov said: "Well, let's start, please."

The commander of the 8th
Guards Army, Colonel General V.I.
Chuikov:

"We all waited for good
weather in order to make the best
use of the accumulated forces. Sappers, together with scouts, removed
minefields in front of the enemy's trenches, having previously made
passages in front of their trenches. From the second half of the night,
the cloudless starry sky began to be covered with clouds, fog rose. The
closer to morning, the thicker and heavier the fog, turning into an impenetrable
veil. At 7 o'clock in the morning Moscow time, kitchens and thermoses with
hot food were brought up, and breakfast was distributed to the soldiers.
The mood of the people was excellent. But the fog thickened so much that
it was impossible to distinguish anything at 10 meters.

At 8 o'clock in the morning, after talking with the neighboring
commanders (69th, 5th shock and 61st armies) and having secured agreement
to act, despite the fog, exactly according to plan, I reported to the front
commander about the readiness for the offensive. G.K. Zhukov gave
the go-ahead. At 8 hours 25 minutes, the artillerymen were given the
command: "Charge!", And at 8 hours 29 minutes: "Tighten the cords!" At
0830 hours, the army artillery commander, General N.M. Pozharsky
ordered: "Fire!"

As a result of the fighting on January 14, the troops of the 1st Belorussian
Front, advancing from the Magnushevsky and Pulavsky bridgeheads,
broke through the main line of defense, advancing

IN AND. Chuikov

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going 12-18 km. Two large gaps appeared in the German defense: one 30 km wide against the Magnushevsky bridgehead, the other 25 km wide against the Pulavsky bridgehead. The distance between these gaps was about 28 km.

South of Pulaw, the 69th Army went on the offensive. In the zone of the 61st Rifle Corps (commander Lieutenant General I.F. Chtorivsky), which was delivering the main blow, two forward battalions began operations, reinforced by artillery and tanks. They occupied the first and second trenches while it was still dark without much interference from the enemy, who suffered very heavy losses from artillery fire, since the fire attack fell at the moment when the enemy was transferring infantry from the first trench to the second. The largest number of those killed turned out to be in the communication channels. After 1 hour 20 minutes, after a stubborn battle, the battalions also captured the third trench, which led to the disruption of the entire system of fire and enemy interaction. The reliably suppressed enemy artillery was silent or hastily changed firing positions. Specially assigned platoons followed the lead battalions and cleared the trenches of the remaining enemy soldiers.

In connection with the successful operations of the advanced battalions, by order of the army commander, at 10 o'clock the main forces of the divisions of the first echelon went on the offensive. Artillery preparation was replaced by a 15-minute fire raid on targets in second position. Since the fog made it difficult to fire from covered positions, all the guns of the regimental artillery groups were brought forward for direct fire. Their aimed fire provided effective support to the infantry and tanks.

At 1030 hours, after firing, the 134th and 274th rifle divisions attacked the second position. Its first trench was quickly captured, but soon the enemy, having recovered from the blow, began to offer ever-increasing resistance. From a grove east of Flerjanów, on the edge of which there were five

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bunkers, the regiments of the 134th Rifle Division met stubborn resistance. From the forest south of Gelenow, the enemy launched a counterattack. The regiments of the first echelon, concentrating mainly the fire of the guns set up for direct fire and tanks on the enemy's bunkers and counter attacking subunits, seized the bunkers in a roundabout maneuver and defeated the enemy in the grove. The counterattacking group was suppressed by artillery fire and then crushed by a counter strike. At 13

hours 30 minutes and the second position was broken. The 274th Rifle Division was counterattacked on the approaches to the second position, before the main forces were brought into battle. Although it took half an hour to repulse the counterattack, this time also allowed the enemy to organize the defense of the 2nd position, the attack of which began only at 11 o'clock. The enemy put up stubborn resistance, especially in the Lagów stronghold, the approaches to which were covered by minefields and an anti-tank ditch. The division commander concentrated the fire of the divisional artillery group on Lagów. In the course of conducting methodical and concentrated fire, the sappers made passages in the minefields. The tanks and infantry that went over to the attack broke the resistance of the 55th Infantry Regiment and captured the second position. However, the enemy immediately launched a new counterattack. It was suspended by artillery fire, and then the enemy was driven back by an attack by infantry and tanks with considerable losses for him. Further, the defense of the main belt was a chain of strongholds and trenches, which allowed the troops of the 61st Rifle Corps, suppressing some of them with artillery fire, bypass others and move deeper into the depths faster. However, the division commanders, saving the second echelons to attack the second lane, did not bring them into battle. The forward detachments of the divisions were not sent either. Therefore, the development of the offensive slowed down somewhat, which delayed the entry into battle of the 11th Panzer Corps. The onset of darkness made it even more difficult for the units of the 61st Rifle Corps to move. But still at 21 o'clock he approached the second lane, advancing beyond

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short January day at 15 km. The breakthrough front increased from 4 to 6 km. Heavy fighting went on all night, as a result of which the tactical defense zone of the enemy was broken through. The 11th Panzer Corps entered the battle, rushing to Radom.

By the end of January 15, the German defense on the Vistula was broken through in a strip of 120 km. The troops of the front advanced 30 km deep into the enemy position from the Magnushevsky bridgehead and up to 50 km from the Pulawy bridgehead. Having introduced mobile groups into battle, they began to pursue the defeated parts of the enemy. The enemy suffered heavy losses in these battles. His five infantry divisions (251st, 6th, 17th, 214th and 174th), defending in the first echelon of the German 9th Army, as well as eight separate battalions were completely destroyed. Did the 25th and 19th Panzer Divisions of the 40th Panzer Corps suffer heavy losses?

On January 14, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front also went on the offensive, lending their left wing to the

action to the 1st Belorussian Front.

The commander of the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front,
Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky.

“On January 14, a few hours
before the start of artillery preparation,
I, members of the Military Council,
commanders of artillery, armored
forces, air army, and the head of
the engineering troops of the front
arrived at the observation post. It
has already dawned, but nothing
is visible: everything is hidden by
a veil of fog and wet snow. The year
is disgusting, and the weather
forecasters did not promise any
improvement. And the time for the
departure of the bombardment was
approaching - K.K. Rokossovsky

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rovers to strike at the enemy's defenses. After consulting with K.A.
Vershinin, I give the order to cancel all actions of aviation ...

Fog and snow still covered everything around. But this could not affect
the general mood to attack without waiting for a clarification. At the
appointed time, I order you to give a signal. Several thousand guns and
mortars, hundreds of rocket launchers opened fire. The process of
artillery preparation was organized differently in the armies, depending
on the local conditions on the lines of their operations. The main thing
was to crush the enemy with the force of fire in the initial period of the
offensive, destroy his defense system and demoralize the defenders ...

Finally, reports began to arrive from the armies operating in the first
echelon. Success was marked along the entire strip, where the main
blow was struck. Already within fifteen minutes after the beginning of the
artillery preparation, the infantry everywhere captured the first trench of
the enemy. We had to fight for the second trench, but our fighters captured
it too. As we moved into the depths of the defense, the resistance of the
enemy intensified.

Thick fog prevented the use of artillery to its full potential. The infantry
attacked, interacting, in essence, only with tanks and guns of direct escort.
From the second half of the day, the enemy began to go over to
counterattacks, using tanks as well, but our troops were advancing
everywhere. In the course of a heavy battle on the direction of the main
attack, the armies operating here

of the first echelon - the 48th, 2nd strike, 65th and 70th - wedged into the enemy defenses from 5 to 8 kilometers. Batov's troops achieved somewhat greater success, where the corps of D.F. Alekseev and K.M. Erastov completed the breakthrough of the first line of enemy defense, having captured the Neselsk stronghold, and bypassed the strong Pultu fortified area. The offensive continued into the night ... "

The battles of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front on January 15 and 16 in the central direction and on its right wing were characterized primarily by the fact that the

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the battle in the zone of the 5th shock and 8th guards armies the 1st and 2nd guards tank armies overtook the infantry and fortified in the operational depth.

Here is how the entry of the 1st Guards Tank Army and subsequent events is described by its permanent commander:

"... A long-awaited phone call rang out at my CP. G.K. Zhukov:

- Start the game!

It was a conditional phrase, which meant that it was possible to lead the army into a breakthrough. I, in turn, gave the order to the corps commanders A.Kh. Babajanyan and I.F. Dremov. Hundreds of engines roared - and the tanks rushed into the gap. The command was sent to the rifle units that were in front: "Free the roads! Tanks are coming!" Majestic and formidable is the picture when an avalanche of armored vehicles rushes forward.

The army was introduced along four routes in one echelon operational formation. The 11th Guards Tank Corps advanced on the right flank, and the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps advanced on the left. Already the first reports, both from our units and from neighbors, indicated that the tankers were crushing and crushing the enemy defenses with powerful blows. 11th Guards Corps A.Kh. Babadzhanyan was rapidly advancing to the Pilica River north of Nove Miasto, and the 8th Guards Mechanized I.F. Dremova, not getting involved in small fights, rushed to Lodz. The routes of movement of both corps were a double tube, one end of which rested on the bridgehead, and the other cut off the enemy's Warsaw grouping.

Fifty kilometers to the right of us, the 2nd Guards Tank Army was advancing, to the left, about thirty kilometers, the 11th Tank Corps of General I.I. Yushchu ka. By 6 p.m. on the first day of the offensive, it became clear that the corps of A.Kh. Babajanyan with the forward detachment

I.I. Rusakovsky successfully overwhelms the loop around the enemy group. To the left moved the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps I.F. Dremova.

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The 1st Guards Tank continued to move rapidly towards the Pilica River.

The command of the 9th German Army, in an effort to eliminate the success of the Soviet troops, committed two tank divisions of the 40th Panzer Corps, which was in reserve, into the battle. But they were brought into battle in parts on a wide front against both groupings of the front and could not stop the rapid advance of the Red Army. The 40th German tank corps, crossed the Radomka River and started fighting for the city of Radom. In the area of the Magnushevsky bridgehead, Soviet units and formations penetrated into the enemy defenses for 25 kilometers, and in the area of the Pulavsky bridgehead, about 40 kilometers. "By the evening of January 15," points out General Tippelskirch, "the section from the Nida River to the Pilica River no longer had a continuous, organically connected German front. A terrible danger hung over the units of the 9th Army, which were still defending on the Vistula of Warsaw and to the south. There were no more reserves.

In the following days, the advance of the troops of the front from both their bridgeheads reached a large scale.

On January 16, formations of the 1st Guards Tank Army, having repelled numerous counterattacks of the 40th German Tank Corps, occupied the city of Nowe Miasto and quickly advanced in the direction of Lodz. Rifle troops advanced behind the tank units. The 69th Army, commanded by Colonel General V.Ya. Kolpakchi, with the 11th Panzer Corps on January 16, stormed the city of Radom, a large enemy resistance center, after which the tankers crossed Radomka in their offensive zone and captured a bridgehead on its left bank. The assault on Radom was carried out with effective air support. At the request of the ground command, the pilots of ground attack and bomber aircraft attacked the most important centers of defense, destroyed fortifications, destroying enemy manpower and military equipment. Using result

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air operations, advancing troops from three directions broke into the city and cleared it of the remnants of the enemy.

33rd Army under the command of Colonel General V.D. Tsvetaeva with the 9th Panzer Corps approached the city of Shidlovets and, together with the right-flank armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front, liquidated the Opatuv-Ostrovets ledge. The fascist German command tried in vain to organize a defense, to check the advance of the Soviet troops at a previously prepared line along the rivers and to ensure the withdrawal of their defeated units. Soviet troops broke through this line on the move and developed a swift offensive to the west.

16th Air Army under the command of Colonel General of Aviation S.I. Rudenko, having complete air supremacy, delivered massive strikes against strongholds, counterattacking groupings and enemy reserves, at the railway and highway junctions of Lodz, Sochaczew, Skierniewice, Tomaszow Mazowiecki. Aircraft operated with the greatest intensity against the columns of the enemy, who had begun a retreat from Warsaw. In one day alone, on January 16, the front's aviation made 3,473 sorties, while losing 54 aircraft. During the day, only 42 sorties of enemy aircraft were observed.

During three days of fighting, the armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, advancing from the Magnushevsky and Pulavsky bridgeheads, united and advanced 60 kilometers, expanding the breakthrough to 120 kilometers along the front. The day of January 17 became especially significant. Was

the defeat of the Warsaw-Radan group of Germans was completed. The capital of Poland, Warsaw, gained freedom. V.D. Tsvetaev

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HISTORICAL REFERENCE.

Warsaw is a transport hub, ports on the Vistula River. At the beginning of the XNUMXth - XM centuries, the capital of the Duchy of Mazovia, in the XNUMXth - early XX centuries, the capital of Poland, in 1807-1814 - the Principality of Warsaw, from 1815 - the Kingdom of Poland, from 1918 - the Polish Republic. In September 1939 it was occupied by Germany.

The 61st Army, advancing from the Magnushevsky bridgehead, part of its forces struck around Warsaw from the south, and the 2nd Panzer Army, introduced into the breakthrough, by the evening of January 16, went west of Warsaw to the Sokhachev region, deeply enveloping the left flank of the Warsaw enemy grouping. At the same time, the 47th Army struck around Warsaw from the north. Deep bilateral bypass tip-

The Warsaw troops of the enemy completely disorganized the defense of the Nazis, a real threat of encirclement hung over them. The fascist German command was forced to begin the withdrawal of its troops from Warsaw. This development of events was of decisive importance for the strike of the troops of the 1st Army of the Polish Army directly on the capital of Poland.

On the night of January 17, the 1st, 3rd and 4th Polish infantry divisions crossed to the western bank of the Vistula south of Warsaw, which

The national flag of Poland over the liberated Warsaw. January 1945

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commanded by brigade general V. Bevzyuk, colonel S. Tchaikovsky and brigade general B. Kinevich. The 2nd Infantry Division under the command of Colonel J. Rotkevich, using the success of the 47th Army, commanded by Major General F.I. Perkhovich, led an offensive around Warsaw from the north. The 6th Infantry Division of Brigade General G. Sheipak attacked the city from the east. On January 17, Polish soldiers broke into Warsaw. At the same time, units of the 61st Army from the southwest and the 47th Army from the northwest entered the city. On the evening of January 17, Warsaw was completely liberated. Much suffering Poland was returned to its capital.

This message resounded throughout the world with particular force. Remembering the joint battles of Soviet and Polish soldiers for Warsaw, the commander of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, General of the Army S.G. Po Plavsky wrote: "The offensive plan of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front was imbued with sincere friendship for the Polish army. Soviet troops performed the most difficult part of the task. They had to break through the enemy defenses, make a deep bypass of Warsaw from the flanks and defeat the main forces of the enemy's Warsaw grouping. The Polish soldiers were given the opportunity to liberate the capital. Its population, having experienced much grief from the fascist enslavers, should have seen that the Polish soldier, shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet one, was driving the enemy out of the Polish capital.

From the combat report of the command of the 1st Belorussian Front

Supreme Commander

about the liberation of Warsaw

Active Army, 17 January 1945

As a result of the deep enveloping maneuver of the Warsaw enemy grouping by mobile troops, the coverage of the combined arms armies from the north and south and the simultaneous strike of the 1st Army of the Polish Army near

supported by massive air strikes, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front on January 17 captured the capital of the Polish Republic, the city of Warsaw.

Commander of the troops, member of the Military Council
of the 1st Belorussian Front

Marshal of the Soviet Union Zhukov
Lieutenant General Telegin

Chief of Staff of the 1st Belorussian Front, Colonel
General Malinin.

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In commemoration of the victory won, Moscow saluted the formations of the 1st Belorussian Front and units of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, which liberated the capital of Poland, with 24 artillery volleys from 324 guns. The formations and units that distinguished themselves most in the battles for the city received the name "Warsaw". By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of June 9, 1945, the medal "For the Liberation of Warsaw" was established, which was awarded to participants in the battles for this city.

Order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to the commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front in connection with the liberation of Warsaw.

Moscow January 17, 1945

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, having made a swift roundabout maneuver to the west of Warsaw, occupied the city of Zhirardow, cut the roads to Sokhachev, crossed the Vistula north of Warsaw and, thus cutting off Warsaw from the west, today, January 17, by a combined attack from the north, west and south, captured the capital of our allied Poland, the city of Warsaw - the most important strategic center of German defense on the Vistula River.

In the battles for capturing the city of Warsaw, the troops [...] of the 1st Polish Army, Lieutenant-General Poplovsky, distinguished themselves. [...]

In commemoration of the victory, the formations and units that distinguished themselves most in the battles for capturing the city of Warsaw are to be presented for the assignment of the name "Warsaw" and for the awarding of orders.

Today, January 17, at 7 p.m., the capital of our Motherland, Moscow, on behalf of the Motherland, salutes the valiant troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, including the 1st Polish Army.

mission, which captured the capital of the Polish city of Warsaw, twenty-four artillery volleys of three hundred and twenty-four guns.

For excellent military operations, I express gratitude to the troops under your command, including the troops

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The Polish Army enters Warsaw. January 1945

1st Polish Army, who participated in the battles for the liberation of Warsaw. Eternal glory to the heroes who fell in the battles for the freedom and independence of our Motherland and our allied Poland! Death to the German invaders!

Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal
of the Soviet Union I. Stalin

The defeat of the Nazi troops on the Vistula line and the liberation of Warsaw came as a surprise to the fascist leadership. For leaving Warsaw, Hitler demanded that the General Staff of the Ground Forces and the commander of Army Group A be severely punished. To investigate the activities of the chief of the general staff, General G. Guderian, a commission was appointed, headed by the deputy chief of the Gestapo, SS man E. Kaltenbrunner. The commander of Army Group A, Colonel General J. Harpe, accused of the disaster on the Vistula, was replaced by Colonel General F. Schermer, and the commander of the German 9th Army, General S. Lutwitz, by General of the Infantry T. Busse.

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The liberated city was a terrible sight. The former flourishing Warsaw, one of the most beautiful European capitals, no longer existed. The fascist German occupiers destroyed and plundered the Polish capital with unparalleled cruelty. With a hasty retreat, the Nazis set fire to everything that could burn. The houses survived only on Shukha Alley and in the quarter where the Gestapo was located. The Citadel area was mined. Fascist vandals destroyed all medical and educational institutions, the richest scientific and cultural values, destroyed the Cathedral of St. John in the Old Town - the largest cathedral in Warsaw, the Royal Palace on Castle Square, the building of the Ministry of the Interior, the main post office on town hall, severely damaged

Dzi Staszyts Palace, which housed many scientific institutions in Warsaw, the National Museum, the Belvedere, the post office building, the Krasinski Palace, the Great Theater. The Nazis destroyed many churches.

Almost all monuments of the history and culture of the Polish people were blown up in the city, including the monuments to Copernicus, Chopin, Mickiewicz, the Unknown Soldier, the column of King Sigismund the Third. The enemy inflicted enormous damage on city parks and squares. The Nazis destroyed the main public utilities. capitals, blew up the power plant, bridges, took out all the most valuable equipment of factories and factories. Destroying Warsaw, the Nazis sought to cross out this city from the number of European capitals and offend the national feelings of the Poles.

For more than five years, the occupiers have killed hundreds of thousands of Warsaw residents in concentration camps and Gestapo dungeons. At the time of the liberation of the Polish capital, there were only a few hundred people who were hiding in basements and sewer pipes. The rest of the population of Warsaw was evicted by the occupiers from the city in the autumn of 1944 after the suppression of the Warsaw uprising. About 600,000 Varsovians experienced the snake

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Pruszkow concentration camp. The commander of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, Lieutenant-General S. Poplavsky, noted: "Warsaw, barbarously destroyed by the Nazi troops, was a depressing sight. Here and there in the streets flashed the inhabitants of the city, who had suffered so much from the hated enemy ...

Passing through Unia Lubelska Square, we met a large group of people. I don't know where the women got the flowers (after all, Warsaw was destroyed and engulfed in flames) and presented them to me and Lieutenant Colonel Yaroshevich. We were hugged by these people who had suffered so much from the occupation and wept, but these were already tears of joy, not grief.

On January 18, the capital of Poland was visited by the President of the Home Council of the People's Council B. Bierut, the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government E. Osobka-Moravsky, the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, Colonel General M. Rola-Zhymersky and representatives of the command of the Red Army. They congratulated the Varsovians on their liberation from the Nazi occupiers. In the evening of the same day, a rally was held in the building of the city People's Rada, which was attended by delegations from all districts of liberated Warsaw. Speaking at this rally, B. Bierut said: "The grateful Polish people will never forget who they owe their liberation to. Hearty brotherly friendship, which

sealed together by shed blood, the Poles will thank the freedom-loving Soviet people for the liberation of Poland from a terrible yoke, the equal of which the history of mankind knows not.

In the message of the Home Rada to the Soviet government on January 20, the deepest and most sincere gratitude was expressed to all the Soviet people and their valiant Red Army. "The Polish people," the message said, "will never forget that they received freedom and the opportunity to restore their independent state life thanks to the brilliant victories of Soviet weapons and thanks to the abundantly shed blood of heroic Soviet soldiers. experienced

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now, for our people, the joyful days of liberation from the German yoke will further strengthen the indestructible friendship between our peoples.

In its reply to this telegram, the Soviet Government expressed confidence that the joint actions of the Red Army and the Polish Army would lead to the speedy and complete liberation of the fraternal Polish people from the yoke of the Nazi invaders. This statement once again confirmed that the Soviet Union was sincerely striving to help the people of Poland liberate the country from fascism and create a strong, independent, democratic Polish state. Later, in honor of the soldiers of the Red Army and the Polish Army, who fell in the battles for the liberation of Warsaw and other cities of Poland from the Nazi invaders, grateful Varsovians erected a monumental monument to the Brotherhood in Arms on one of the central squares of the capital.

In an effort to alleviate the plight of the inhabitants of the destroyed Warsaw, the Soviet people provided them with food and medical assistance. The Executive Committee of the Union of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the Soviet Union sent two consignments of medicines, dressings and medical instruments to Poland. The news of the assistance of the Soviet people to the population of Warsaw was greeted by the working people of Poland with great joy. "Polska Zbrojna", noting the cowardice of the Soviet people in Belarus and Ukraine, wrote in those days: "Just a few months ago, these peoples themselves were under German occupation, were ruined and robbed, and now they are helping the Polish people. We will never forget the fraternal help of the Soviet people."

The Soviet government decided to render fraternal assistance to the Polish people in restoring the capital of their country. It sent its experts to Warsaw to draw up a plan for the revival of Warsaw, as well as

decided to provide logistical assistance in the amount of 50% of the costs envisaged by the plan. Cro

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Parade of the Polish Army in honor of the liberation of Warsaw. January 1945

Moreover, as a token of friendship with the Polish people, in an effort to alleviate the plight of the inhabitants of Warsaw, the Soviet Union provided them with a significant amount of medicines and dressings, 60,000 tons of bread free of charge. Having liberated Warsaw, the Soviet and Polish units, with the help of the population, began to clear the city of mines. Soviet sappers in a short time neutralized about 2 million mines and unexploded ordnance, cleared the roadways of the main streets from the ruins and remnants of fires that covered them. Soviet engineers helped build a pontoon bridge between Warsaw and Prague, restore the power plant, and put the water supply in order.

So, the 9th army of the enemy, which had a very rich history, practically ceased to exist. In the summer of 1943, Soviet troops battered her in the Kursk-Oryol direction. The following year, and also in the summer, she fell into the boiler on the Berezina. In January 1945, it was shattered into small pieces by a powerful blow from Soviet artillery and tanks. According to intelligence data, the Hitlerite command was gathering its last

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zervs: from Yugoslavia - the mining corps, from near Berlin - the reserve army. The newly created military association was given the name of the 9th Army for the fourth and last time.

At the head of this army were the best generals of the Wehrmacht - Model, von Bock, Froman. Its last commander, von Lüttwitz, solemnly declared that his motto was to lead from the front of his troops: "I only lead when I am in front." Considering the direction in which the army was moving, von Lutwitz's situation was clearly unenviable.

As a result of the defeat of the 9th Army and the retreat of its units to the north and south, an unprotected corridor was formed in the enemy's defenses. Defending themselves in small groups, the Nazis hoped to plant reinforcements on one of the lines and delay the advance of the 1st Belorussian Front.

Meanwhile, on the 1st Ukrainian Front, the strike force of the 3rd Guards Army, Colonel General V.N. Gordova continued to develop the offensive on Kielce. After fierce battles, during which the enemy involved 60 tanks and self-propelled guns, including 12 "tigers", the 76th Corps, Lieutenant General M.I. Glukhov in cooperation with parts of the 25th tank corps, Major General E.I. Faminik broke through the intermediate defensive line of the Germans, by the middle of the day drove the enemy out of Daleshytse and a number of other points in the area. By the end of the day, units of the 25th Panzer Corps, having pulled ahead, were fighting for Kranow, Nestakhuv, that is, on the outskirts of the outer bypass of the city of Kielce.

On the front of the 4th Panzer and 13th Armies on January 14, intense battles went on all day with the main forces of the German 16th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions that had entered the battle. With the coordinated actions of infantry, tank and artillery formations, with the support of aviation, the counterattacking formations of the enemy were dismembered, separate groups were surrounded and destroyed, and those that eluded the encirclement

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G.

RK ii
Bridge in Poznań
across the Värtu

LAST mine"
EP

lair

yoke

Bridge across the Varta, restored by Soviet sappers. 1945

sti rolled back to Kielce. On the approaches to it, the enemy defended himself especially fiercely, so the advance of the right flank formations of the 4th Panzer Army and the rifle corps of the 13th Army was slow. On the other hand, the left-flank units of the 4th Panzer Army, bypassing the main forces of the 16th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions from the west, reached Chentsiny at 19:00, and captured the settlements of Pekoszow and Rykoszyn at 21:00.

Despite the fact that with the advance of the advanced units of the 4th Panzer Army in the Pekoszow area, the retreat routes of the German grouping to the west were cut, and the left-flank formations of the 3rd Guards Army were already advancing from the east to Kielce, the Germans continued to fight stubbornly on the eastern and southern approaches to the city, trying to ensure the withdrawal of their troops from the Ostrovets bag. Favorable conditions were created for the envelopment and defeat of the Kielce group of Germans.

On January 15, on the front of the 13th Army, the fighting continued with the same intensity. The main forces of the German 24th Panzer Corps, thrown back to the north, and the remnants of infantry formations that had withdrawn from the main defense

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telnoy strip, with all their might tried to keep the area of Kielce. Against the 4th Panzer and 13th Armies, the Germans threw the remaining units of the 16th and 17th Panzer and 20th Motorized Divisions, the 76th Fusilier Regiment, the 64th Reserve Regiment, the 698th Regiment of the 342nd Infantry Division, up to 75 tanks and assault guns and 25 armored personnel carriers with infantry participated in enemy counterattacks. All these enemy forces were crushed. In the afternoon, pursuing the retreating enemy units, the 102nd Rifle Corps (commander Major General I.M. Puzikov) of the 13th Army approached the southern outskirts of Kielce.

At this time, the 76th Corps of the 3rd Guards Army broke through the outer fortifications of the city of Kielce and, in cooperation with the 25th Tank Corps, attacked Kielce from the northeast, east and south. By 3 p.m., the left-flank formations of the army broke into the city and captured its eastern part. At the same time, troops of the 13th and 4th tank armies entered Kielce from the south and west. By joint attacks of infantry and tanks, the enemy troops defending Kielce were completely defeated and the city was taken. The enemy launched a series of fierce counterattacks in an attempt to restore the situation in the Kielce region. Having repelled these attacks, the troops of the 13th and 3rd Guards armies firmly secured the Kielce region. Although on that day the weather was mostly non-flying, Soviet aviation took an active part in the defeat of the Germans at Kielce, making 372 sorties.

With the capture of the city of Kielce, an important junction of railways and highways and a major stronghold of the German defense on the roads to Cz stochowa, the right flank of the main strike force was firmly secured and conditions were created for the rapid development of the offensive of the 13th Army. By January 15, the enemy's operational reserves, which he had concentrated even before the start of the operation, were destroyed on the entire front of the main strike force. The broken units, hiding behind the rearguards, retreated to the third rear defensive position.

ce, created on the river Pilica. The persecution has begun

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the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army of the Germans on the entire front of the main strike force.

At noon on January 15, the commander of the 6th Army, Lieutenant General V.A. Gluzdovsky gave a combat order to bring the army into battle. As a result, the strikes of the 3rd Guards and 6th armies merged into a single strike, aimed at intercepting the communications of the Ostrovetsko-Opalguv group of Germans. The rapid advance of the army strike force, the defeat of a significant part of the German 88th Infantry Division and the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the city of Ostrovets disrupted the control of enemy troops. His retreat turned into a flight, as a result of which a significant part of the completely serviceable material of the Germans was left as trophies on the very first day of the offensive of the 6th Army. The offensive of the formations of the 6th Army, which did not stop on the night of January 16, introduced even greater demoralization into the ranks of the enemy. Destroying and capturing significant groups of Germans, the forward detachments of the 6th Army occupied Tsmieliuv and Ostrovets by the morning of January 16, and captured Kunuv by the end of the day.

The capture by the troops of the 6th Army of the railway and the main loading stations - Ostrovets, Kunuv - disrupted the loading of military equipment and manpower into the echelons of the enemy. Those echelons that were loaded failed to break through to the west, since the right-flank formations of the 3rd Guards Army on January 16 and 17 were already fighting on the outskirts of Skarzysko Kamenna, and its left-flank formations at that time were rapidly advancing towards the river. Pilica. The German command, not being able to assemble the defeated and dismembered troops for an organized struggle against the units that were continuously pursuing and coming out on the withdrawal route, gave the order to stop the organized resistance and break through in small groups to join up with their main forces. But the order was too late. Soviet troops were already ahead. Broken units and small units of the Germans, throwing heavy weapons, artillery

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leryu, convoys, scattered, trying to get through the forests and forest roads to their own.

The Soviet troops achieved great success on January 17. Developing the offensive along the entire front, they overcame the enemy defenses on the Warta River and by storm captured a large military-industrial and

The administrative center of Polypi is the city of Czȳstochowa. The 3rd Guards Tank Army, 5th Guards Army and units of the 31st Tank Corps took part in the battles for Czȳstochowa. During the capture of the city, the 2nd tank battalion distinguished itself under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union, Major S.V. Khokhryakova. He was the first to break into the city and, together with a motorized rifle battalion of machine gunners, started fighting there. For decisive and skillful actions and personal courage shown in the battles for Czestochowa, Major S.V. Khokhryakov was awarded the second Gold Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union. Then an advanced detachment under the command of Colonel G.S. broke into the city. Dudnik as part of the 42nd Infantry Regiment of the 13th Guards Division, as well as units

Enemy defenses breached!

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2nd Motorized Rifle Battalion of the 23rd Guards Motorized Rifle Brigade, commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union Captain N.I. Goryushkin. Hot battles ensued. Soon, the Soviet soldiers completely cleared Czȳstochowa from the enemy.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Czestochowa is the administrative center of the Czestochowa Voivodeship. Paulin-Katashk Monastery (XUP-X\UTI centuries), in the church (the Polish name of the Catholic church) - the icon of Our Lady of Czȳstochowa (XT\ century).

From the combat report of the command of the 1st Ukrainian Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the liberation of the city of Czestochowa

Active Army, 17 January 1945

The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front captured the heavily fortified positions of the enemy on the river. Pilica and, developing the offensive, as a result of a maneuver and a decisive blow, they captured a large military-industrial and administrative-economic center of Poland, an important communication hub and a stronghold of the defense of the Nazis - the city of Czȳstochowa.

Konev

Krainyukov

Sokolovsky

On the same day, units of the 6th Guards Tank Corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, commanded by General V.V. Novikov, in cooperation with the 7th Guards Tank Corps, occupied the military-industrial center and communications center of the city of Radomsko, cutting off the Warsaw-Chenstochowa railway. The troops of the 59th and 60th armies, after repulsing enemy counterattacks, started fighting on the northern defensive bypass of Krakow. Coming out to the city, they both baked the left flank of the shock group of the front. Aviation of the 2nd Air Army made 2424 combat

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departure. The 38th Army of the 4th Ukrainian Front, fighting on the line of the Dunaets River, broke through the enemy defenses on a front of 30 kilometers and reached the approaches to Nowy Sanch.

Thus, during the six days of the offensive, the 1st Ukrainian Front broke through the enemy defenses on a 250-kilometer front, defeated the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army, drew the operational reserves of Army Group A, located opposite the Sando-Mirsky bridgehead, into battle, inflicted a serious defeat of the 17th army, overcame the rivers Vistula, Wisloka, Charna Nida, Nida, Pilica, Warta. Having advanced 150 kilometers in the direction of the main attack, the Soviet troops reached the line of Radomsko-Czestochowa-north of Krakow-Tarnow. This created favorable conditions for striking at Breslau, cutting off the communications of the Krakow enemy grouping and capturing the Upper Silesian industrial region.

Chapter 6

EXIT TO THE PAZRAN DEFENSE LINE. IMPACT ON BRESLAU (WROCLAW)

In connection with the successful development of operations, on January 17, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command specified the tasks for the fronts in the Oder direction. The 1st Belorussian Front was tasked with capturing the Bydgoszcz-Poznan line no later than February 2-4. The 1st Ukrainian Front was to continue its main forces attack on Breslau (Wroclaw), reach the Oder south of Leszno no later than January 30 and seize bridgeheads on the western bank of this river, liberate Krakow with left-flank armies.

In those days, as eyewitnesses testify, at the headquarters of the Fuhrer reigned, in the words of General G. Guderian, "complete confusion." As after the defeat of the German troops near Moscow, Hitler carried out regular executions on his generals for the defeat in the area

Warsaw. On January 19, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht signed another order.

Copy

01/19/1945 Fuhrer Printed
in 3 copies. Command document Ex. 1. Delivery by officer only

HITLER'S ORDER DATED 01/19/1945 To
commanders of troops in theaters of operations,
commanders
of army groups and armies with notification to the chiefs of the
main headquarters of the Air Force and Navy

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I order:

1. Commanders of army groups and armies, commanders of corps
and commanders of divisions are personally responsible to me:

a) for any decision to carry out operational movements;

6) for any planned attack on the scale of a division and above, which
is not provided for within the framework of the directives of the higher
command;

c) for each offensive action on stable sectors of the front that goes
beyond the scope of normal combat operations and tends to draw the
attention of the enemy to this sector of the front;

D) for each planned withdrawal or retreat;

A) for the planned abandonment of the occupied position, fortified
stronghold or fortress.

In all cases listed, it is necessary to report in advance so that I
have the opportunity to intervene in the adoption of the final decision and
so that in the event that I give a possible counter-order, the latter can be
brought to the attention of the troops in a timely manner.

Solemn march with the guards banner

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2. Commanders of army groups and armies who

corps mandirs, divisional commanders and their chiefs of staff, as well as every officer of the general staff or any officer serving in the operational headquarters, is responsible to me for ensuring that the report sent to me contains the unvarnished truth. In the future, I will take draconian measures in the event of any attempt on their part to conceal the real situation at the front, whether done deliberately, through negligence or carelessness.

3. I must point out that the maintenance of a communication network in proper condition, especially in conditions of heavy combat operations and in situations of crisis, is a prerequisite for the implementation of command and control in combat. Each military commander is responsible to me so that this network of communication with the higher headquarters, attacks with subordinate command instances, is not interrupted, and that, using all means, up to personal participation and intervention, continuous communication up and down is ensured in any conditions of the situation.

The leadership of the Wehrmacht hastily regrouped troops from Germany and the Baltic states. So, from January 19 to 26, the brandenburg motorized division, the 412th security division, the 33rd infantry division, the 15th infantry division, the 192nd infantry division arrived from Europe only in the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front, 433rd reserve infantry division, 433rd and 463rd reserve infantry divisions, from the Baltic - 4th tank division, 31st infantry division, 32nd infantry division. The Berwalde and Merkish Friedland divisions were re-formed.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

The motorized division "Brandenburg" was formed in October 1943 by reorganizing the division "Brandenburg" (parts of the intelligence and counterintelligence service) and the inclusion of parts of the fortress division "Rhodes". The divisions "Brandenburg" and "Mer kish Friedland" were formed from parts of the people's grenadier divisions and the remnants of the 211th Infantry Division.

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However, neither the change in leadership, nor Hitler's threatening order, nor the formations brought into battle, as well as numerous march formations, could fundamentally change the situation on the central sector of the Soviet-German front.

Marshal G.K. Zhukov demanded that the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front preempt the enemy at the Warsaw defensive line.

In this regard, the combined arms armies had to

as soon as possible to go to the line Thorn, Kolo, r. Warta, and mobile troops - to reach the named line no later than three days later, that is, January 20th. The front commander believed that if the tank forces did not do this, they would have to deal with suitable enemy reserves. In order to speed up the advance of tank troops to the indicated line as much as possible, it was proposed to assign the best tank and mechanized units to the forward detachments and send these detachments forward. The main forces of the mobile formations were to move just as swiftly behind the advanced detachments, not getting involved in battle with enemy barriers and bypassing the barriers. The 1st Guards Tank Army was ordered, leaving a small cover from the side of Lodz, with the main forces to rapidly advance to the western bank of the river. Warta. At the same time, the 9th and 11th tank corps, bypassing Lodz from the south, were to advance to the river. Warta. 2nd and 7th Guards Cavalry Corps under the command of Lieutenant General V.V. Kryukov and M.P. Konstantinov were to follow the tank troops.

Combined-arms armies had to move behind mobile troops, making transitions of 20-25 km per day. Light artillery and mortar units had to be led at the head of the columns. Tank and self-propelled units, reinforced with infantry, were ordered to advance 15-20 km ahead. All armies, and especially mobile troops, needed to pay special attention to the organization of the supply and provision of ammunition and fuel so that

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troops moved with their stocks. Concerning the organization of communications, the commander of the front troops pointed out that, in the main, radio communications and communications delegates on vehicles and aircraft should be used. Wired communication should be used mainly in the front-army link. In order to establish order in the rear, the front commander demanded that they be quickly cleared of the scattered enemy groups remaining there, as well as quickly organize regulation on the roads.

The pursuit of the enemy was carried out by mobile troops and advanced detachments, strong in composition, detached from the combined arms armies, corps and divisions. The forward detachment of the 5th shock army, for example, consisted of a tank brigade, a tank regiment, a rifle regiment with 70 vehicles, a self-propelled artillery battalion, an anti-tank artillery regiment, a guards mortar battalion, a heavy mortar battalion, an anti-aircraft artillery regiment, and an engineering companies. Corps forward detachments included: a rifle battalion in vehicles, an artillery battalion, a battalion of self-

mobile artillery, a sapper company and a chemical protection department. Approximately this composition stood out forward detachments from rifle divisions. The pursuing troops during the days of fighting on January 18 and 19 were actively supported from the air by aviation. On January 17, the 16th Air Army made 2506 and on January 18 635 sorties. German aviation continued to be virtually inactive. In two days, only about 20 sorties were recorded.

From January 20 to January 22, the tank troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, continuing the pursuit of the enemy, broke through the enemy's third Varto defensive line and reached the fourth Poznan defensive line, advancing another 120-140 km in the northwestern and western directions. The enemy, not having ready reserves, tried to organize the defense of the most important strongholds,

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nodes of resistance and individual sections of defensive lines. To this end, he enlisted various consolidated units from the retreating defeated units, as well as police units, SS units and Volkssturm battalions.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Volkssturm - militias in Nazi Germany. They began to be created in the fall of 1944 for the total mobilization of men aged 16 to 60 years. Since January 1945, women from the age of 18 were also called up for the Volkssturm. The Volkssturm was formed under the general leadership of Heinrich Himmler, since 1925 a member of the Nazi Party, from January 1929 the Reichsfuehrer of the SS, from 1943 the Minister of the Interior, in 1944 the commander-in-chief of the reserve, from January 1945 the commander of the Vistula army group.

The armament of the Volkssturm is carbines and Faust cartridges. In the autumn of 1944, up to 100 battalions operated on the Soviet-German front, and more than 150 from February 1945. They were used to build and protect rear defensive lines, as well as to replenish regular army units.

The onset of warm weather and the beginning of the opening of the rivers made it impossible for the Soviet troops to cross

Hero of the Soviet Union A.I. Yakushev after the battles on the Vistula

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lyatsya through water barriers on the ice, so they were forced to build heavy bridges for the crossing of tanks and self-propelled artillery. This circumstance, to a certain extent, was reflected in the pace of pursuit of the 11th and 9th tank corps, which reached the river on January 20. Warta in the Pencznev sector, east of Sieradz, and then were forced to go north and cross on January 21 in the Unieyuv region, where a serviceable crossing was captured.

During January 21 and 22, the mobile troops of the front continued to advance towards the fourth Poznan defensive line. By the end of January 22, they reached the line: 2nd Guards Tank Army - the western outskirts of Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), Samochin; The 1st Guards Tank Army - Reyovets, the eastern outskirts of Poznan, started fighting on the city defensive bypass (on the eastern bank of the Warta River).

Intelligence found that by January 22, the German command had moved new reserves to the fourth Poznan defensive line. The 33rd Infantry Division appeared in the Thorn area, arriving by sea from Danzig. In the region of Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), units of the 4th Panzer Division, which arrived from the Baltic states, were noted. In the battles of January 22, units of the 15th Latvian SS Infantry Division and the 31st Infantry Division were discovered in the Nakel area, and units of the 192nd Infantry Division were found in the Shrimm area (on the Warta River south of Poznań). In addition, according to intelligence data, on the eastern bank of the river. Oder regrouped the 433rd and 463rd reserve infantry divisions, intended to occupy the border fortified areas.

There were, therefore, sufficient grounds for assuming that the German command had decided to stop the offensive of the Soviet troops and stabilize the front on its eastern border. This assumption was fully confirmed by the testimonies of prisoners and captured German documents. In a number of orders of the German high command, it was emphasized that "the Pomeranian and Oder ramparts are the last

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line of defense, on which the Russians must be detained at any cost. The orders of Hitler and Himmler, the commander of the Wisla Army Group, required "holding the cities surrounded by the Russians at any cost." In order to win the time necessary to bring up the troops and occupy the border fortified areas, the German command decided at all costs to delay the offensive on the fourth Poznan defensive line. For the defense at this line, it was important to keep such defense nodes as Thorn, Bromberg and Poznan, where the bulk of the German

reserves.

Thus, the mobile troops of the 1st Belorussian Front in the entire offensive zone approached the fourth Poznan defensive line of the enemy, covering the approaches to the German border. On the right flank, in the Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), Nakel sector, the 2nd Guards Tank Army penetrated this line, capturing the Nakel region on the move, as well as Bromberg (Bydgoszcz), which was taken by the 9th Guards Tank Corps. The average advance rate of tank formations reached 45 km per day. On some days the rate of advance reached 70 km per day. From January 16 to 22, tank troops traveled in a straight line up to 300 km, and if their maneuvering is taken into account, up to 400 km.

At the second stage of the Sandomierz-Silesian operation of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the position of the armies operating in the Breslau direction took the pronounced form of a dissecting wedge, the tip of which was still formed by the 3rd Panzer and 52nd armies. This peculiar form of operational maneuver left its mark on the nature of the operational formation of the formations that made up this wedge.

The armies advanced in battle formations in depth, with forward detachments in front. The deep formation of the armies made it possible to parry the enemy's blows to the flank and rear of the advanced units and formations. The flank armies (3rd and 5th Guards), advancing in a ledge behind the armies of the center, carried out these tasks from

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The passage of the first train over the bridge over the river. Vistula

carrying to the entire grouping of the front, operating in the main direction. The pace of the offensive in pursuing the enemy, despite the winter conditions, was high, and combined arms armies often did not lag behind tank formations.

The pursuit of the retreating enemy was carried out on a wide front, along all roads available in the zones of the advancing armies, and column routes. The rifle divisions for the most part followed in marching formations in two columns, having in front of them, in addition to reconnaissance and combat guards, forward detachments. They were strong and mobile formations, usually consisting of rifle battalions, reinforced by a significant amount of anti-tank and self-propelled artillery (one anti-tank destroyer regiment and one self-propelled artillery regiment), and therefore capable of independent combat with significant

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mi infantry and tank groups of the enemy. In addition, the vanguard (lead detachment) of each rifle regiment could independently fight with the rear guards, behind the gardens and counterattacking groups of the enemy, since the artillery was distributed among the rifle battalions, and the rifle regiment, allocated as the vanguard of the division, as a rule, received artillery reinforcement similar to forward detachments.

Thanks to this distribution of artillery over the column and the measures of combat support, the ambushes and small groups of the enemy encountered on the way of the movement were not in a position to slow down the pace of the pursuit in any way. The forward detachments and formations of the general shackled armies boldly burst forward, not stopping to eliminate individual enemy groupings located in the gaps between the roads. The Germans during this period were so shocked and demoralized by the swiftness, strength and scope of the actions of the Soviet troops that their detachments remaining in the rear and hiding in the forests sought to avoid clashes with units of the Red Army. In small groups, in a deadly way at night, they tried to break through the Oder. Many of these groups, having lost all hope of escape, surrendered.

During the course of the pursuit, the main forces of the armies moved for the most part in forced marches in columns and deployed only to liquidate large enemy groupings that remained in the rear, or to repulse enemy flank attacks. The combat operations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front had a pronounced maneuvering character. The peculiarity of the situation in the zone of the 3rd Guards Army consisted in the fact that under the blows of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, advancing with a ledge forward, the defeated formations of the enemy, fleeing from persecution, partly left in a southwestern direction and cut the communications of advanced formations 3 th Guards Army. Therefore, during the period of pursuit, battles were fought simultaneously at great depths. Sometimes they wore

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Communication through the Vistula. From a painting by the artist I.S. Sorokin

very tense character, since large groups of Germans were discovered, and significant forces were diverted to eliminate them. So, on January 20, when the left-flank formations of the 3rd Guards Army were already much west of the city of Piotrkow, its right-flank formations fought in the Opoczno region, that is, more than 40 km behind the advanced units of the army.

A large group of Germans remaining in the rear of the army tried to cut off the army's communications and break through in a southwestern direction with attacks from the Opoczno and Tomaszow regions. By a skillful maneuver of the Soviet troops, the enemy group, numbering up to 17 thousand people, breaking through with a fight from the Opoczno region, was surrounded in the forests south of Opoczno and subsequently destroyed there. Smaller groups, surrounded and destroyed in the areas southwest and southeast of Opoczno, suffered a similar fate.

On January 22, the forward formations of the 3rd Guards Army, together with the 25th Tank Corps, reached the Varta River and started fighting for the crossings. By this time, units of the second echelon of the army (the 120th Corps under the command of Major General F.S. Danilovsky) in the forests southeast of Lask were surrounded and defeated

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a large grouping of Germans, leaving from under the blow of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. This grouping included units of the 19th and 25th tank divisions, the remnants of the 10th, 45th, 112th, 214th infantry divisions and other units and formations with a total strength of up to 12 thousand people and 100 tanks each.

The 52nd Army of Colonel General K.A. successfully operated. Koroteev. When forcing the river Prosna se

K.A. Koroteev, or rather Landsberg, the troops of the first echelon were counterattacked by the enemy. Covering itself from the counterattacking group and not getting involved in battle with it, the 373rd Rifle Division, advancing in front, continued to move west. The liquidation of the enemy group was taken over by divisions of the second echelon. From January 20, the troops of the army, overcoming the resistance of individual enemy groups, advanced 20 km and captured a large highway junction - Pitschen.

The further the Soviet troops advanced westward, the more difficult the situation became. The enemy, having strengthened resistance on the distant approaches to Breslau, increasingly began to use counterattacks with infantry and tanks. Fierce battles unfolded beyond Rykhtal, where the enemy counterattacked army formations three times with the support of artillery, tanks and aircraft.

At the same time, the Germans did not stop trying to strike at the advanced right flank of the 52nd Army. So, on January 22, the enemy launched a counterattack east of Jols against the 73rd Corps, which was advancing in the first echelon of the army, simultaneously striking both from the front and from the north - to the rear of the right-flank units.

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A flank attack from the north by the decision of its commander, Major General S.S. Martirosyan was repulsed by units of the division of the second echelon of the corps, and an infantry group of up to 500 people with tanks that broke through in the center of the corps was destroyed by units of the first echelon.

The neighbor on the left, the 5th Guards Army, was a kind of connecting link between the front's main strike force and the armies of its left wing. Its right-flank formations, using the success of the 52nd Army, advanced faster than the left-flank ones. Three corps were in the first echelon, following the ledge one after the other. Each corps had more than one division in the second echelon. In the course of the pursuit, the army more than once had to repulse flank attacks of large enemy groups supported by tanks. Acting in such conditions, on January 20, after intense fighting in the border zone, army troops invaded Germany and captured the city of Rosenberg - a major highway junction and a strong stronghold in the Bres-Lawl direction, and on January 21 captured the cities of Kreizburg and Guttentag. Warehouses with large stocks of various kinds of property were found in Kraizburg. 31st Tank Corps Major General G.G. Kuznetsova at that time was advancing on Gross Strelitz, securing the left flank of the army.

The commander of the 5th Guards Army, Colonel General A.S. Zhadov:

"I must say that by this time the activity of our fighter aviation had somewhat decreased due to the fact that it lagged behind the advancing troops, because bad weather and wet soil made it difficult to equip new airfields. The aviators experienced these meteorological difficulties very painfully and did everything possible to overcome them and assist the infantrymen, tankers, and artillerymen in defeating the enemy.

On this overcast day, I met with the commander of the supporting fighter aviation division

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zia three times Hero of the Soviet Union Colonel A.I. Pokryshkin. And, it must have happened, right before our eyes, German fighters set fire to several to cars.

"Look, Alexander Ivanovich, how bold the enemy aviation is! I remarked to him. "Can't we do anything?"

Pokryshkin was not in the mood to disregard such a remark. And I was sure that he would do even the impossible under these conditions, but he would definitely punish the Nazis. And so it happened. Pokryshkin returned to the division and personally conducted a sortie with a group of fighters, and then landed them on a site northeast of Rosenberg. By the morning of the next day, a fighter regiment was relocated here, which successfully covered our troops as they approached the Oder and crossed it.

The so-called wandering groupings of the enemy cause a lot of trouble to the command of all instances. Remaining in the rear of the Soviet troops, they fettered the reserves, often diverted significant forces to the fight, interfered with the work of rear organs, disrupted communication lines, and raided headquarters.

...On January 22, the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front moved to the Czystochowa area. The next day, the front command became aware that the remnants of the 42nd German Army Corps (parts of the 72nd, 88th, 342nd and 291st Infantry Divisions under the command of General A. Finger, with a total number of up to 6000 infantry with artillery) had reached area 10 - 15 km northeast of the city of V.Ya. Kolpakchi Radomsko. Breaking away from the basics

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highways into the forests and trying to break through the Oder, they moved in the direction of Czystochowa and threatened the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front. At that time, the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps was in the reserve of the commander of his troops. Marshal I.S. Konev ordered the 7th Guards Mechanized Corps to destroy this enemy grouping without bursting into the town of Radomsko and the front headquarters area. The troops of the corps by that time were concentrated in the forest, 20 km northwest of Czystochowa. Frame

was fully equipped and ready for immediate action. Its commander, Lieutenant General I.P. Korchagin assigned the task to the chief of staff of the corps, Major General D.M. Barinov, allocating for this the 25th and 26th Guards Mechanized Brigades, as well as the 5th Guards Motorcycle Battalion.

The data received from intelligence allowed the main forces of the corps, without stopping, from the march to begin to encircle and destroy the group of troops of the 42nd German army corps.

By 6 p.m., the forward detachment of the 26th Guards Mechanized Brigade (3rd motorized rifle battalion with a tank company of the 215th tank regiment and a mortar battalion) under the command of the brigade's chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel N.M. Prokofiev approached the southern outskirts of Radomsko. Here the chief of staff of the corps set him the task of turning around and, together with the units of the 5th motorcycle battalion, go on the offensive in the direction of Kotsezhova, Vonglin, Antonev, forcing the enemy to withdraw in the south, favorable for us direction.

At 1930 hours the advance detachment of the 26th brigade turned around at the line indicated to it. Here the battalion immediately went on the offensive. The soldiers and officers in this battle showed examples of heroism and perseverance in the destruction of enemy units. The tank platoon of lieutenant V.A. Gribanov, who destroyed more than a hundred Nazis. Tank landing

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destroyed up to 300 Nazis. The detachment of the Siberian junior sergeant N.A. Babenko. Being in a tank assault, the squad fighters in the area of the settlements of Vonglin and Antonev smashed 23 wagons and destroyed more than a dozen Nazis. When the platoon commander failed, Babenko took over command of the platoon and successfully continued the battle. Artillerymen of Senior Lieutenant B.V. Volkov was suppressed by six heavy machine guns and four vehicles were knocked out. Driver V.V. Sokolov killed three fascists in hand-to-hand combat with a rifle butt. Noticing that an enemy officer was aiming at the commander of the battery with a pistol, he finished him off with the butt. Reconnaissance machine gunner Junior Sergeant 3.K. Kenzhibaev destroyed several Germans and captured the major and the captain.

The Soviet tankers, and after them the infantry, crossed the attack several times, but the darkness and smoke from the fires hid the enemy firing points, which delayed the advance of the units. The battle of the forward detachment was carried on with increasing tenacity until late at night. By midnight the resistance was broken.

With heavy losses, the enemy withdrew to the Klizin area. Several hundred dead enemy soldiers and officers remained on the battlefield. After taking possession of the Antonev and Vonglin line, the forward detachment, firmly entrenched, continued to destroy the enemy with fire, who sought to get out of the encirclement in the western and northwestern directions.

Around midnight, the command of the corps, seeing that the Germans were reliably blocked, and night actions to destroy them were difficult, decided to continue the liquidation of the encircled grouping at dawn the next day. By morning, the tasks for the troops were clarified, reconnaissance and observation of the enemy were organized. At eight o'clock in the morning the offensive began. The enemy stubbornly resisted. He provided especially strong opposition to the 2nd motorized rifle battalion of the 26th brigade, commanded by Major I.N., Hero of the Soviet Union. Dani lin. The main forces acted against this battalion

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G.P. Pozharsky conducts political information at a firing position

groups seeking to break through in a southerly direction. But Major Danilin, having directed the main efforts of the battalion to the most critical areas, managed to repel enemy counterattacks. Soon his battalion began to pursue the retreating enemy. During the pursuit, Major Danilin was seriously wounded.

By the end of January 24, the encircled 6,000-strong grouping was basically liquidated. When the main grouping was being destroyed, in the Sukha Ves area and the forests south of Radomsko, reconnaissance discovered up to an enemy infantry battalion with convoys. To liquidate this group, the 5th Guards Motorcycle Battalion, which had been released by that time, the 215th Tank Regiment, and the 1st Motorized Rifle Battalion of the 26th Brigade, were sent. By the evening of January 24, this group of Germans also ceased to exist.

On January 23, the 52nd Army advanced to the Oder (Odra) River. The next day, the forward detachments of the 4th Panzer Army also reached the river and began to cross it north of Breslau. Success has been achieved on the site

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17th Guards Mechanized Brigade in the Keben area. Under the cover of night, eight volunteer groups were the first to rush to the left bank in boats. In the middle of the river, they were discovered by the enemy, who opened heavy artillery fire. Part

boats were sunk, and some were forced to return. Only one boat, on which there were senior sergeants T.D. Sedenkov and T.K. Kerzhnev, Sergeant F.P. Tyumentsev, junior sergeant G.A. Slobodenyuk and corporal V.V. Vilsky, managed to approach the opposite bank. Rapidly attacking the enemy, the brave fighters captured two pillboxes and captured 22 Nazis. Brigade commander lieutenant colonel L.A. Churilov took all measures to consolidate the success, and in the midst of the struggle, he, along with the headquarters, arrived at the bridgehead and led the unequal battle. The bridgehead was retained, and soon expanded. For skillful leadership, personal courage and resourcefulness, Lieutenant Colonel Churilov, scouts Sedenkov, Kerzhnev, Tyumentsev, Slobodenyuk and Vilsky were awarded the high title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Despite the stubborn resistance of the enemy, on January 22-25, the armies of the main strike group of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached the Oder almost in a 200-kilometer zone, crossed it on the move and seized bridgeheads in the Steinau, Brig and Oppeln areas, for the expansion of which it deployed fierce fight. In the area east of Breslau (Wroclaw), units of the 52nd Army reached the approaches to this fortified city.

Chapter 7

LIBERATION OF KRAKOW. CONQUERING THE SILESIAN INDUSTRIAL REGION

If in the Breslavl direction the Germans fought rearguard battles, withdrawing the main forces behind the Oder under the blows of the Soviet troops, then on the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front they decided to fight on the eastern bank of the Oder in order to hold the Silesian industrial region. In addition to the important economic significance of this area, possession of it allowed the German command to threaten the left wing of the main grouping of the front. At the same time, the Germans continued to hold Krakow, apparently counting on the fact that, relying on this fortress area, they would be able to strike the 17th Army on the flank and rear of the front's main shock group to disrupt the offensive of Soviet troops in the Silesian direction.

On the evening of January 17, Marshal I.S. Konev received a directive from the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, specifying the subsequent tasks of the troops of the front.

Particularly important

No. 11006 of 17.01.45 at 21.00

Personally to the commander of 1 Ukr. front

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command

orders: 1. The main forces of the troops of the front to continue the offensive in the general direction to Wielun, Breslau with the

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Lew to go no later than 30.1.45 to the Oder River south of Lissa (Leshno) and seize bridgeheads on the western bank of this river.

2. The left wing of the front (the 59th and 60th armies) should capture the city of Krakow not later than 20-22 January 1945, after which they would continue the offensive against the Dombrovsky coal region, bypassing it from the north and part of the forces from the south.

21st Army with 1st Guards. use the cavalry corps to bypass the Dombrovsky coal region from the north in the general direction to Tarnowitz, Kozel (on the Oder River).

3. Establish from 24.00 17.1.45 the following demarcation line between the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts: to the former Niepolomice and further on the river. Vistula to Strumen, Bohumin. All points for the 4th Ukr. front inclusive.

4. Report on the given orders.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. Stalin

Antonov

At midnight on January 18, the commander of the front clarified the decision, defining the tasks for the armies, and reported to the Headquarters of the Supreme Command about the orders given to them.

Since the summer of 1944, the Nazis have been preparing Krakow for a long defense. Several circular earth fortifications were built around the city, and 240 reinforced concrete gougues were installed on the streets, a large number of dugouts and barricades were prepared. At the last moment, many important industrial and cultural sites were mined. Even for Wawel - the most valuable monument of architecture, the repository of national relics and the shrine of the Polish people - was prepared for undermining. Thanks to the rapid actions of the troops of the front, as well as the help of Soviet intelligence officers and Polish underground workers, the invaders failed to carry out their barbaric plan. On January 19, the 59th and 60th armies, as a result of a roundabout maneuver, combined with a frontal attack, liberated a major political and cultural center of Poland.

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city of Krakow. The population enthusiastically welcomed the Red Army. The military council of the front and the Polish Provisional Government took all measures to normalize life in the city. On the very first day after the liberation of Krakow, a power station and a large mill started working, a railway equipment plant was prepared for start-up, and the restoration of the water supply system began.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Krakow is an ancient city located on the Vistula River, founded on the site of the settlement of the Visla, in the [X century] Western Slavic tribal associations. In the XI-XIV centuries, the capital of the Polish state. In 1809-1815 it was part of the Principality of Warsaw. In 1815-1846, the center of the Krakow Republic, in 1836-1841 it was occupied by Austrian troops, after the Krakow uprising of 1846, the Krakow Republic was attached to the Austrian Empire.

From the combat report of the command of the
1st Ukrainian Front to the Supreme
Commander-in-Chief on the liberation of
the city of Krakow

Active Army, 20 January 1945

The troops of the front on January 19 continued to develop the offensive and fought their way up to 25 km in a day. On the left flank, breaking through the outer and inner contours of the fortifications of the city of Krakow, after two days of stubborn fighting, they defeated the enemy's Krakow grouping of the 344th, 359th, 601st, 78th infantry divisions and completely captured the large military-industrial and administrative-political center of Poland - city of Krakow.

In the center, as a result of a swift attack by tanks and infantry, they captured important road junctions, large cities - Wielun, Belchatow and the cities of Osyakow, Klobuck, Lubliniec, Krzeszowice, and on a front of 25 km they crossed the state Polish-German border with battles.

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January 19 front troops occupied 750 populated

points, among them the cities of Wielun, Belchatow, Osyakow, Klobuck, Lublinec, Krzeszowice. According to preliminary data, trophies were captured on the day of the battle: tanks and self-propelled guns - 29, guns - 87, vehicles - 1570, motorcycles - 1500 and a large number of warehouses with ammunition and military equipment. In the battles for Krakow, up to 10,000 enemy soldiers and officers, over 250 guns, 50 tanks and a large number of other military equipment were destroyed [...].

Konev
Krainyukov
Sokolovsky

Marshal I.S. Konev:

"On January 19, early in the morning, I went to the observation post of the 59th Army to General Korovnikov. The advancing troops of the army, deployed from the second echelon, were pulled up to strike directly at Krakow from the north and northwest. A view of the city was already opening from the observation post. Having assessed the situation on the spot together with the army commander, we decided to send the 4th Guards Tank Corps attached to this army under the command of General Poluboyarov to bypass Krakow from the west. In combination with the actions of the 60th Army, which at that time was moving out to the southeastern and southern outskirts of Krakow, this maneuver threatened the Krakow garrison with encirclement. The troops of the 59th Army were already preparing for the assault. They were given the task of breaking into the city from the north and northwest and capturing the bridges across the Vistula, depriving the enemy of the opportunity to drag out resistance in the city itself.

Having planned the forthcoming strike at the observation post, Korovnikov and I rode out in "jeeps" directly into the battle formations of his troops. Poluboyarov's corps was already entering the city from the west, and the battle was in full swing on the northern outskirts. The promotion was successful. The Nazis led a rifle, auto

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Anti-aircraft gunners cover the crossing over the river. Vistula

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mat, machine-gun, artillery, and at times even tank fire, but, despite the noise and crackle, it was still felt that this fire was already dying out and, in essence, the enemy was broken. The threat of encirclement paralyzed his resolve to cling tenaciously to the city. Corps Poluboyaro

wa was about to cut the last road going west. The enemy had only one road left - to the south, to the mountains. And he began to hurry away.

By evening, the troops of General Korovnikov, smashing the enemy's rearguards, went through the whole city, and parts of the 4th Guards Tank Corps from the northwest and parts of the 60th Army from the east and southeast suffered heavy losses to the enemy on the way out and after leaving Krakow. Thanks to the skillful actions of the troops of Korovnikov, Kurochkin and Poluboyarov, the oldest and most beautiful city of Poland was taken safe and sound.

It is said that a soldier's heart becomes accustomed after a long war to the Quid of destruction. But no matter how accustomed it is, it cannot put up with the ruins. And the fact that we managed to liberate a city like Krakow intact was a great joy for us. By the way, the Nazis laid more than enough mines in the city - under all the main structures, under many historical buildings. But they couldn't blow them up. The self-exploding slow-motion mines did not have time to work either. The first day, sappers, both army and front-line, literally worked tirelessly.

The commander of the 59th Army, General I.T. Korovnikov:

"By a directive dated January 17, the Headquarters ordered the left wing of the front to capture Krakow no later than January 20-22, and then continue the attack on Dom, brovsky coal district. The front command assigned the task of liberating Krakow to the 59th and 60th armies. An important task was assigned to units of the 115th Rifle Corps. So I decided to go to this building. To my question, as a corps commander

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MM. Krasnyukov I.F. Assessors

sa assesses the activation of the enemy at its junction with the 43rd rifle corps, General S.B. Kozachek, with his characteristic humor, replied: "So it's he who scares us, but he himself is surely withdrawing his units to a new intermediate line. I don't think I'm chasing the rearguard "little thing" and I'm not going to "hit the sparrows with cannons." Having approved his decision on the order and timing of the attack on Krakow, I ordered him to work closely with the 4th Panzer Corps. Here I told Kozachka that he had been appointed commandant of Cracow. During the battle directly for Krakow, the enemy put up very stubborn resistance to units of the 4th Panzer

buildings on the northern outskirts of the city (Krivodzha). To help them, General P.P. Poluboyarov deployed corps artillery, a division of guards mortars, and put some of the guns on direct fire. Together with the infantry that had pulled up, the tankers broke through the enemy's defensive line from the western and northwestern sides. The fighting vehicles of the tank corps often burst forward, clearing the way for the infantry with the fire of their cannons and machine guns. This was possible due to the fact that they correctly alternated rapid forward thrusts and fire from a place from shelters.

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On January 18, the 92nd Rifle Division under the command of Colonel M.V. approached the Velka area in deployed combat formations. Vinogradova and by 16 o'clock started a fight. Knowing that the Nazi command, as a rule, destroys the cities they leave behind, the division commander decided to speed up the pace of the assault. Our infantry, infiltrating through courtyards and lanes, together with tankers, captured the central quarters of Krakow, including the memorial square where, at the end of the battle, Heroes of the Soviet Union Ambrosov, Kobylansky, Razin were buried, as well as the chief of communications who died during the liberation of the city Army Colonel G.A. Rogov and other warriors.

At dawn on January 19, the 245th Rifle Division crossed the Vistula and, together with units of the 12th Guards Tank Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel N.G. Dushak, broke into the southern part of Krakow beyond the river. Having mastered it, they continued to advance, driving the enemy out of the suburban villages to the south and southwest of the city. On January 19, units of the 60th Army also entered Krakow, in cooperation with which the complete liberation of the city was completed. In the battles in the Krakow direction, the 59th Army lost 267 people killed and 1243 wounded, while the enemy lost about 8000 people killed and over 900 prisoners. This fact testifies to the high military skill of the personnel and the skillful leadership of the troops by the commanders and staffs of all levels of our army.

missions."

The writer Boris Polevoy shared his impressions of his stay in Krakow on the first day of his release:

"Yes, it's a blessing that this city was saved. We drove along the medieval streets, and the satellite told us: the fifteenth century, the sixteenth century, the eighteenth century.

- Stop here, please.

We left, and the teacher solemnly declared:

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Party organizer of the battery N.K. Zarin explains,

how to use trophy in battle

faustpatrons

other

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— Before you the tenth century. Chapel of Felix and Ada ukts. Pearl of Europe.

And indeed, one could admire an example of magnificent architecture. The architecture is strict and at the same time peculiar, unique. The building would have just been flying, looking up into the sky.

Then the old man took us to some kind of cathedral. We heard our steps somewhere in front of us, and the echo diligently duplicated our voices, as if responding to us from somewhere from under the dome. Excellent sculpturs looked at us, but the guide led everything forward, not letting us stop.

And so we ended up in some kind of side chapel and froze in surprise. The walls of the chapel were covered with mi... frescoes by Russian masters. The same motives, the same eternal gospel themes, but everything is so Russian. As if at once there was a smell of native forests and birch trees rustled their leaves in the decorous semi-darkness of a strange temple. Russian? Where? What? How?

- Yes, yes, gentlemen officers, this is Russian. The Polish kings were good connoisseurs of art, and, you see, they invited your masters to paint this chapel.

I don't know, maybe it's not good, it's dishonest towards the owners of the house, so to speak, but these walls, painted with frescoes in the style of our Paleshans, seemed to me the brightest and most interesting of all that we saw.

Then we asked our volunteer escort to take us to where Hans Frank, Hitler's vicegerent in Polysh, kept his flag. The teacher took us to a building decorated with a line of massive columns."

The loss of Krakow forced the Germans to leave the areas located southeast of this city with extreme haste, since the slightest delay in these areas threatened to encircle and defeat several divisions. Left-flank 106th Corps of the 60th Army, commander Major General P.F. Ilinykh, pursuing the Germans and overcoming the resistance of the German carriers

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guards, with swift throws on the move crossed several water lines (Dunaets, Ushvitsa, Raba) and by January 22 connected in the area of the city of Velichka with units of the 28th Rifle Corps, commander Major General M.I. Ozimin.

The floor is again given to Marshal I.S. Konev.

“Already in the evening of January 19, on the day of the capture of Krakow, we, assessing the prospects for fighting in the Silesian industrial region, realized that the enemy was capable of concentrating a large group of troops here: up to ten twelve divisions, not counting many individual and special units. We were faced with three tasks, which in the end combined into one: to defeat the Silesian grouping of the enemy without great sacrifices on our part, to do this in the shortest possible time and, if possible, to preserve Silesian industry intact.

The decision was made: to bypass the Silesian industrial region with tank formations, and then, in cooperation with the combined arms armies advancing on Silesia from the north, east and south, force the Nazis, under the threat of encirclement, to go into the open field and defeat them there. To this end, on January 19, Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army received the task from the front command to change the direction of its offensive. Previously, Rybalko's troops were aimed at Breslau (Wroclaw), but due to the situation in Silesia, it was necessary to turn his army sharply from north to south along the Oder River. For Rybalko, this task was not only unexpected, but also very difficult: a sharp turn of an entire tank army, already aimed in a different direction and on the move, was a very difficult task.

At the same time, appropriate orders were given to the combined arms armies. 21st Army Colonel General D.N. Gusev, reinforced by the 31st tank corps of General V.E. Grigoriev and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps of General V.K. Baranova, should

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on was to strike at Beuten (Bytom), covering the Silesian industrial region from the north and northwest; 59th Army I.T. Korovnikov, reinforced by the 4th Guards Tank Corps P.P. Poluboyarova, was to continue the offensive on Katowice; 60th Army P.A. Kurochkin - strike along the Vistula, covering the Silesian industrial region from the south.

This is how the general plan for the capture of the Silesian industrial region looked like.

Comment by the commander of the 5th Guards Army, General A.S. Zhadova:

"I must say that Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev made a very bold and original decision. He changed the direction of actions of the 3rd Guards Tank Army of General P.S. Rybalko, advancing on Breslau (Wroclaw), turning from north to south along the Oder River. At the same time, the 21st Army attacked Beuten, covering the Silesian industrial region from the north and northwest, the 59th Army continued its offensive on Katowice, and the 60th Army attacked along the Vistula, covering the Silesian industrial region from the south.

A sharp turn of Rybalko's entire tank army during a front-line operation is a very complicated matter. But Konev took such a step, because in this maneuver he saw the most effective solution to the main task - the defeat of the Silesian grouping in a short time and with the least losses on our part, as well as the possibility of preserving the integrity of the industry of this important area for Poland. In addition, the new direction of the offensive of the 3rd Guards Tank Army fell on the flank of the enemy grouping operating in the zone of the 5th Guards Army, which accelerated the exit of its formations to the Oder.

The commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front tells about subsequent events:

"..I can't help but pay tribute to Pavel Semenovitch Rybalko: having extensive experience in maneuvering actions

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As a result, this time he maneuvered with the utmost speed and precision, and, not losing a single hour, went south with fighting. By the same time, up to

the 21st and 59th armies approached the Silesian industrial region. They were already at Beuten (Bytom) and were fighting for the capture of Katowice.

I went to the troops and pondered the forthcoming decisions. The further offensive of the 60th Army from the south and the 3rd Guards Tank Army from the north is already P.S. Rybalko clearly formed pincers around the enemy, which, in the future, could only be closed and thereby encircle the entire fascist German group accumulated there in the Silesian industrial region. There were real opportunities for this. But before me, as the commander of the front, the problem arose: should this be done? I understood that if we surround an enemy grouping, numbering ten or twelve divisions without reinforcements, and fight with it, then its resistance could drag on for a very long time. Especially if you take into account the area in which she will resist. And that's where all the salt is. The Silesian industrial region is a big nut: its width is seventy and its length is one hundred and ten kilometers. This entire territory is completely built up mainly with reinforced concrete structures and massive masonry residential buildings. Before us was not one city, but in fact a whole system of cities merged with each other with a total area of five to six thousand square kilometers.

It is appropriate to emphasize once again that the refusal of the commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front to completely encircle the Silesian grouping of the enemy is right.

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measured as the optimal solution in those conditions. Under the strong onslaught of Soviet troops from the front, fearing a deep detour, the Nazis were forced to EXIT the Silesian industrial region into the "gate" left southwest of Katowice.

By the end of January 20, the troops of the 59th Army came close to the Dombrowsky coal basin. Stubborn battles began with the enemy, who had occupied a defensive line here in advance. On its cover, the Germans threw hastily put together battle groups from the remnants of units and formations defeated in previous battles. Against the 43rd Rifle Corps, the battle group of the 75th Infantry Division, which included the remnants of three other divisions and 7-8 special-purpose battalions, acted. Against the 115th Rifle Corps was the combat group "Lott", the backbone

which was the 334th Infantry Division. Up to seven battalions of various special units and a separate infantry regiment were grouped around this division. All these units and formations, under the threat of death, fought desperately and repeatedly, with the support of tanks, went over to counterattacks. The fighting took on a fierce character. The troops had to knock out the Germans from almost every house, since the stone buildings were ready-made fortified points, convenient for the ALA of defense.

The forward detachments of divisions of the first echelon of the 21st Army (commanded by Colonel-General D.N. Gusev), brought into battle from the second echelon of the front, broke through the enemy defenses at the turn of the Varta River and, building on success, by the end of January 20, they reached line Stahlhammer, Zymbkowitz. At 1400 hours on January 20, the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps was brought into the battle. The blow of the 21st Army and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps was struck at the weakest point of the enemy. As a result, by January 20 troops of the army on the Vistula from the north over the German group covering the Dombrowsky region January 24 troops of the 21st Army

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Soviet tankmen on the streets of Gleiwitz on the day of his liberation

with the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, which had left the day before on the right flank on the river. Oder (Odra) from Oppeln to the river. Klodnitsa, fierce battles were fought on the rest of the front. The 31st Panzer Corps operated on the outskirts of Gleiwitz from the northwest. Thanks to this, the corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army accelerated the exit to the turn of the river. Klodnitsa.

The 7th Guards Tank Corps (Commander Major S.A. Ivanov) after a short battle for crossing the river. Klodnitz was drawn into the forest area west of Gleiwitz. The enemy, using forest barriers, with the fire of guns and mortars, greatly impeded the movement of the corps. Highways and clearings were under fire from his artillery and machine guns, detours due to impassability were often absent; a continuous forest massif hampered the deployment of the corps forces. Overcoming a 30-kilometer forest with a fight took two days, the corps captured Zvonovits only on January 26, for tying a battle on the outskirts of the city of Rybnik. On January 27, the corps occupied part of the city. The enemy of the 8th Panzer Division and the 1st Jaeger Division brought up here put up stubborn resistance, often turning into counterattacks

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infantry supported by tanks, artillery and aviation. 9th Guards Mechanized Corps Lieutenant General I.P. Sukhov, overcoming the resistance of the enemy, by the end of January 24, together with the 31st Panzer Corps, captured the city of Gleiwitz.

In order to avoid encirclement, the enemy tried by all means to delay the movement of the 3rd Guards Tank and 21st Armies. Units of the 20th Panzer Division, the remnants of the 350th and 432nd Infantry Divisions, the 3rd, 4th, 9th, 54th Volksturm Battalions, the 97th Mountain Infantry Division, with the support of approximately 80-90 tanks ("tigers" and "Panthers"), five mortar and up to eight artillery batteries, he put up strong resistance and repeatedly went over to counterattacks. German aviation in groups of 5-10 aircraft bombed the battle formations of the Soviet troops. But the enemy was no longer able to change the situation.

As a result of the entry of the 5th Guards Army to the Oder, the advance of the right-flank formations of the 21st Army to this water barrier, the advancement of the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps to the rear of the Silesian grouping of Germans and the strike of the 3rd Guards Tank Army on the left flank of the enemy grouping, the situation on the left wing of the front has changed dramatically. The access of formations of the 3rd Guards Tank Army and the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps to enemy communications led to the fact that further blows of this army by the left flank formations of the 59th Army and the 4th Guards Tank Corps in the same direction created a real opportunity to close ring around the Dombrowskaya group of Germans.

On January 27, the 60th Army captured Auschwitz and occupied the territory of the Nazi concentration camp.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Oswiecim (Auschwitz) is a Nazi concentration camp on the territory of occupied Poland near the town of Auschwitz, near Krakow. Created in May 1940 on an area of 500 hectares. The camp had 45 external commands and branches, the largest being Brzezinka (founded in October 1941)

and Monowitz. Inhuman conditions of existence were created for the prisoners of the camp. Their hard labor was used for the construction in Poland of military-industrial enterprises of the Krupp concerns, I.G. Farbenindustrie" and others. Various medical experiments were carried out on the prisoners, in particular, to find means of sterilization to carry out a program of biological extermination of entire nations. The camp operated gas chambers, crematoriums for burning prisoners.

Despite the cruelest terror and atrocities, an international resistance movement arose in Auschwitz, organized by the communists. The military organization of the Resistance created underground battle groups and prepared an uprising. A group of Soviet prisoners of war in Auschwitz, who worked on the dismantling of wrecked planes, managed to get weapons. The uprising broke out in the fall of 1944 spontaneously, ahead of schedule, and was brutally suppressed. On January 27, 1945, several thousand surviving prisoners of Auschwitz were liberated by the Red Army. In 1946, a museum was created on the territory of the former camp. In September 1958, the International Auschwitz Committee was organized, which included representatives of 16 European states.

A monstrous picture of fascist barbarism appeared before the Soviet soldiers. On the territory of the concentration camp there were 35 warehouses with prisoners' clothes, of which 29 were destroyed by the Nazi executioners at the last moment. The rapid offensive of the Soviet army prevented them from completely covering up the traces of their crimes. About 1.2 million sets of upper and lower clothing of the tortured were found in the 6 storage rooms alone, and 7,000 kilograms of hair taken from the heads of 140,000 women were found at the tannery of the Auschwitz camp. The expert commission established that at least 4 million citizens of the USSR, Poland, France, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Holland, Belgium and other countries were killed in this camp alone. A stream of former prisoners released from fascist captivity was rolling towards the advancing Soviet troops. At the sight of tormented people, the most hardened heart shuddered. Hatred for the enemy, the desire to rescue their brothers and sisters from slavery increased the offensive impulse of the troops.

Writer Boris Polevoy recalls:

"Auschwitz. Huge space covered with barracks buildings. They lay in chains, like neatly laid bricks. There was a square in the center. Not far from it is a line of quadrangular

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smoked pipes near a strange oblong concrete structure. And all this was cordoned off by a massive fence with wire and high voltage wires. The streets were full of people. They moved somehow strangely, as if aimlessly, like autumn leaves under gusts of wind.

The pilot has already marked the landing site. When they landed. They helped turn the car around, and they themselves moved along the field covered with melted snow to the camp.

An asphalt road led us to a massive iron gate, on the visor of which one could see the inscription woven from forged rods: "Atfey tasPv { Not."

Here, this inscription was perceived as unprecedented CYNICITY. As we approached the gates, a crowd of about two hundred poured out of them. All were in the same canvas jackets, striped trousers, pie caps, and cloth shoes with wooden soles. All thin and not pale, and even some greenish,

IN AND. Chuikov speaks to the personnel of the army on the eve of crossing the river. Vistula

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but timid, incredulous smiles seemed to glimmer on the emaciated faces. They were shouting something back and forth, through the open gates, in which the same striped people were waving their hands after them. The crowd reeked of carbolic acid, sweat, the heavy smell of unwashed clothes.

A man ran out into the field, grabbed a handful of snow and began to eat it. Others followed his example. Several people with a run rolled on an elongated ice. The front one fell, the rest fell on him, and everyone laughed happily, like schoolchildren returning home. And others barely dragged their feet, scraping wooden soles on the asphalt. Three were led hand in hand.

Here is a huge shed - a warehouse the size of an average hangar. Here the hair of those who were sent to the crematorium furnaces was kept. They were stored neatly, strictly sorted - separately long, separately shorter. Separated by colors. Blonde hair, brown hair, brunette hair, chestnut hair. At the door

IN AND. Chuikov speaks to the personnel of the army on the eve of crossing the river. Vistula

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the hair lay in bulk, and in the middle of the room they were already bundled up, tied up, lined with burlap, destined for shipment. It was no longer human hair, but a valuable raw material for industry.

Here is another warehouse, clothing - mountains of boots, shoes, boots, leggings, leggings. Here are old, worn-out boots, and baby booties, and elegant women's shoes.

Children's barracks. There are kids of all ages here. Two hundred boys and girls of different ages with senile faces sit and lie on the bunk beds in their striped dressing gowns, seeing us off with indifferent, detached looks of people who have lost faith in everything.

"They don't answer in any of the languages," the female doctor, the captain of the medical service, says contritely. "We have not yet found out what was done to them here. They also did some experiments. Some drugs were injected into their veins. Strange: there are many twins, brothers and sisters among them. Maybe this is ridiculous, this is just my guess, but it seems to me that some ways were sought to increase the reproduction of the population. - The captain of the medical service, judging by the orders and stripes for wounds, is an experienced, experienced warrior. But here, in this children's branch of the Auschwitz hell, she was clearly at a loss. He smokes cigarette after cigarette. - Lord, what a horror! If I had not seen all this, I would never have believed that this could be.

The front of encirclement around the Silesian grouping of the enemy was shrinking. Realizing the impending threat, the German troops began to retreat. Pursuing them, the formations of the front captured on January 28 the center of Upper Silesia, the city of Katowice, and then destroyed the retreating enemy troops in the forests southwest of the industrial region. The Silesian industrial region was liberated. Not a single factory, not a single mine was destroyed. Many enterprises worked at full speed, releasing their products. In the struggle for the Silesian industry

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ny district was also attended by Polish partisans. Thus, the partisan detachment of the Dombrovsky partisan district of the Army of Ludova under the command of S. Charnets, together with the forward detachment of the 59th Army, after two days of fighting, liberated the northeastern suburb of Sosnowiec.

From the combat report of the command of the 1st Ukrainian Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the capture of the Upper Silesian industrial region and the city of Katowice

Active Army, 29 January 1945

First. The troops of Front 28.1 continued their offensive, maneuvering and decisively attacking the infantry and tanks, they captured the center of the Dombrovsky coal region of Katowice, the city of Krulevska Huta (Koenigshütte), as well as the

Lamy Schwintohlovitz, Antonenkhutte, Halde. Having inflicted a defeat in stubborn five-day battles on the Upper Silesian enemy grouping, on January 28, 1945, the troops of the front completely captured the Upper Silesian industrial region.

In the remaining sectors of the front, battles continued to expand the bridgeheads on the western bank of the river. Oler [...].

Konev
Krainyukov
Sokolovsky

On the same day, the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front reported to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the completion of the defeat of the enemy front opposing the troops and on reaching the Polish-German border.

From the report of the command of the 1st Belorussian Front to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the defeat of the enemy's opposing grouping

Active Army, 29 January 1945

Your order is to crush the enemy grouping opposing the troops of the front with a powerful blow and

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quickly reach the line of the Polish-German border - completed.

For 17 days of offensive battles, the troops of the front covered up to 400 km. The entire western part of Poland in zone 1 of the Belorussian Front was cleared of the enemy, and the Polish population, which had been oppressed by the Nazis for five and a half years, was liberated. The rapid advance of the troops prevented the Nazis from destroying cities and industrial enterprises, railways and highways, did not give them the opportunity to steal and exterminate the Polish population, take out cattle and sell

permission.

In the liberated large cities of Poland, Lodz, Radom, Tomaszow, Bydgoszcz (Bromberg) and the vast majority of others, all the laws in force by January 14 of this year have been fully preserved. d. industrial enterprises with all equipment and stocks of raw materials. The largest industrial center of Poland, the city of Lodz, with all industrial enterprises and equipment, except for that exported by the Germans in 1939-1941, is completely intact. Workers and employees of factories and plants are in place and ready to start work. Available on most

The stocks of raw materials allow this to be done immediately. Also completely in good condition power plants, plumbing and trams. All cultural and medical institutions have been preserved. The city of Radom, a major industrial and commercial center of Poland, has been completely preserved.

In agriculture, horse stock, inventory, seed material and food supplies have been preserved.

Commander of the 1st
Belorussian Front Marshal of the
Soviet Union G. Zhukov

Member of the Military Council

1st Belorussian Front Lieutenant
General Telegin

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In the meantime, the enemy was regrouping and bringing in new formations: the 208th and 254th infantry divisions from Czechoslovakia, the 8th tank division from Hungary, and the 408th infantry division from the reserve army. On the way, according to intelligence, were the 21st Panzer Division from the Western Front, the 18th Motorized Division from the 2nd Army. Most of these formations had the task of stopping the advance of Soviet troops on the Oder (Odra), preventing the creation of bridgeheads on its western bank.

Chapter 8

FIGHT FOR BRIDGAGE ON THE ODER (ODRE).
DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY IN SCHNEIDEMTAL
(PILA) AND IN POZNAN

The formations of the 4th Panzer Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front were the first to break through to the Oder (Odra). On the night of January 22, 1945, the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps under the command of Colonel V.F. Orlov. He immediately crossed the Oder (Odra), capturing eighteen three-story long-term firing structures of the Breslav fortified area on its left bank.

History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. T.5. M.1963.
S. 82.

GEOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Oder (German), Odra (Polish and Czech) - a river with a length of 903 km. Sources in the spurs of the Sudetes, flows mainly through the plains in Poland and Germany, flows into the Shchetinsky Gulf of the Baltic Sea. The main tributaries are Bubl, Nysa-Lurashka, Varta. Major cities are Ostrava, Wroclaw, Frankfurt an der Oder, Shche Qing. It does not freeze annually, for 15-30 days. The length of navigable sections is 761 km. The width of the valley is from 2 to 20 km, the channel is 200–300 m. The speed of the current is 0.2–0.5 m/s.

The commander of the 4th tank army, General D.D. Lelyushenko:

“...Having completed the training, the 17th Guards Mechanized Brigade of the 6th Guards Mechanized Corps under the command of Colonel L.D. Churilo

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wa began to cross the Oder at night. The corps commander also arrived here, a little later - and we with the fire group.

To start the crossing, eight combat groups of 8-12 people each were prepared from volunteers, almost all communists and Komsomol members. They were armed with anti-tank rifles, grenades, anti-tank mines, smoke bombs and machine guns. Front forcing covered a section up to about a kilometer. For fire support on the eastern bank of the river, the tanks of the commander of the 22nd self-propelled artillery brigade V.M. Tkachuk. The situation was difficult. Later, Leonid Dmitrievich Churilov told me the following. The time has come to launch the boats. Impenetrable darkness, the ice drift has not ended on the river, a strong wind with snow molds in the face, and on the opposite bank the enemy lurks in readiness to destroy everyone who crosses. But despite this, the boats were launched, and the groups moved to carry out their combat mission. The enemy noticed the boats when they were already in the middle of the river. The Nazis, having illuminated the area with rockets, opened intense fire, as a result of which some of the boats were sunk, some, having lost their orientation, ended up near their shore.

The dawn broke a little. On the opposite bank, five of our fighters lay down in a chain near the enemy pillbox. So we've arrived! Soon the guards rose to their full height, shouting "Hurrah!" attacked not a friend and captured a pillbox. I must say that we are not talking about ordinary pillboxes, but about stationary reinforced concrete structures that had 2-3 floors each. Luckily for us, we were ahead of the enemy with our rapid pace of advance, and he did not have time to plant full-time combat garrisons in pillboxes, they were somewhere on the way and were late, but here

only duty groups fought back.

Churilov immediately organized fire support for Tkachuk's tanks.

Soon we learned the names of the five brave men: the platoon commander, foreman T.D. Sedenkov, senior sergeant T.K. Kerzhnev, Corporal V.V. Vilsky, rya

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Ours in Germany

dovye G.A. Slobodenyuk and F.P. Tyumentsev. Overcoming enemy fire, they boldly entered the battle, by skillful maneuver outflanking the enemy from the rear, captured a pillbox with four cannons and six machine guns, destroying up to three dozen Nazis. Only one Slobodenyuk, who was in the head patrol, captured an enemy machine gun, destroyed 12 fascists.

The commander of the 17th Guards Mechanized Brigade immediately took all measures to consolidate the success. The first to help the Sedenkov group was a platoon under the command of junior lieutenant A.R. Meletyan, who had a 45-millimeter gun with him. He swiftly hit the enemy's flank, captured another pillbox, and the commander of the gun, senior sergeant B.A. Kostyakov destroyed five enemy firing points and up to two dozen Nazis. Meletyan personally destroyed 8 Nazis, he himself was wounded, but continued to lead the battle to the end.

The 17th Guards Brigade crossed the Oder at full speed. Behind it, the 16th Guards Mechanized Brigade began crossing. In those difficult moments, tanks were needed on the west bank. And so Tkachuk on ferries began to ferry his famous "three-four" and self-propelled guns of the 22nd self-propelled artillery

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brigade. The first to go was a tank company under the command of junior lieutenant Isa Klinovich Sultanov. As soon as the tanks left the ferry, Sultanov led them on the attack and, together with the motorized rifle battalions, at the head of which was the 3rd battalion of Captain V.M. Dikarev, they destroyed up to 300 Nazis, 15 guns and mortars along with crews, 21 machine guns and captured the southern outskirts of Keben. In this fierce battle, Captain Dikarev was seriously wounded. Until his strength left him, he led the battle. For outstanding valor and courage, Viktor Mikhailovich Dikarev was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. He was replaced by the chief of staff, Captain M.I. Trubitsyn. The battalion under his leadership defeated 15 enemy attacks in the village of Keben, destroyed up to 200

Nazis, 6 tanks, 8 guns and kept Keben. Trubitsyn personally destroyed 6 Nazis. For high valor and courage, he became a Hero of the Soviet Union ...

... On January 27, under the powerful cover of aviation and anti-aircraft artillery, the tanks of the 10th Guards Corps were crossing. Everything was carried out in an organized manner and without loss. And already on the morning of January 28, Chuprov struck from the west to the rear of the enemy, which he did not expect. A non-commissioned officer school, two regiments of infantry, two security battalions, reinforced by about a hundred tanks and armored personnel carriers, and four Volkssturm detachments armed with faustpatrons, occupied the defense here. But despite the extremely fierce resistance of the Nazis, on January 30, the Urals took Steinau and reached the bridgehead of the 29th motorized rifle brigade.

On January 30, the main forces of the 3rd Guards Army, General V.N., reached the Oder. Gordova. The Oder bridgehead in the area of Keben, Steinau, Luben was united and securely fixed.

On the morning of January 23, formations of the 21st Army went to the Oder (Odra) southeast of Breslau. By the end of the day, they were fighting on the outskirts of the ancient Polish city of Oppeln. On the same day, in the morning, the troops of the 3rd Guards Tank and 5th Guards Armies, who had left the day before

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in the Oppeln area, fought intense battles on the outskirts of the city. In the Oppeln area, up to two regiments of infantry, an artillery regiment, up to a battalion of tanks and a sapper battalion of demolition men defended themselves, who blew up all the bridges across the Malapan and Oder rivers. The basis of the defense of Oppeln was the lines built along the river. Malapan and a number of irrigation canals, on which solid trenches were dug with platforms for machine guns and mortars. The rivers and canals were covered with ice, allowing infantry and light artillery to cross. The crossing of tanks and heavy artillery required building bridges.

On February 24, a powerful stronghold of the enemy's defense on the Oder fell - the fortress of Oppeln. Now the whole stretch from Breslau to Oppeln was in the middle of a battle for the river. Before the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front lay the last major water barrier, covering the path to the vital centers of Germany. Crossing the Oder was fraught with great difficulties. On the left bank, the enemy built long-term fortifications and concentrated large forces in them in advance. The width of the Oder in this area reached 500 meters. In addition, the river did not freeze. Only along the coast were ice edges formed.

Advance detachments, having crossed on henchmen

means, captured several small bridgeheads. Through the heroic efforts of Soviet sappers, crossings were built under enemy fire. As a result, the main forces went through the Oder. The enemy fortifications were broken through, and the Soviet troops advanced 20-25 kilometers south and southwest of the river. Almost simultaneously, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front crossed the Oder northwest of Breslau, broke through the fortified long-term defenses of the Nazi troops on the western bank, and in four days advanced up to 60 kilometers, expanding the breakthrough in the band to 160 kilometers.

Colonel General A.S., commander of the 5th Guards Army, tells about the difficulties of forcing the Oder River and the struggle for bridgeheads. Zhadov:

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"Forcing the Oder was carried out on a wide, 50-kilometer front. In some parts of the river there was no ice, there was slush. The steep banks are icy. Frost and strong winds, frequent snowfalls made it difficult to prepare for the crossing and capture bridgeheads on the left bank. Only in some places it was possible to cross the ice with infantry with light guns, so the crossing and the battle for the expansion of the bridgehead took place almost without tanks. In the areas where divisions were forcing, where there was no ice, one crossing was built and local crossing facilities were widely used.

... During the last week of January, there were fierce battles for the expansion of the captured bridgeheads. Formations and units were subjected to continuous attacks by infantry and tanks, not only from enemy units defending on these axes, but also from fresh reserves approaching from the depths. The bridgehead in the area north of the city of Oppeln was expanded to 22 km along the front, but its depth was small - only about 5 km.

For the Oder frontier, the soldiers of the army fought with exceptional courage and courage. The 32nd Guards Rifle Corps was awarded the name Oder. The merit in this of all formations and parts of the corps, its commander, General A.I. Rodimtsev, deputy for political affairs, Colonel P.I. Petrov, who skillfully and purposefully led the political work of the corps headquarters, headed by an experienced colonel I.A. Samchuk, artillerymen, headed by Colonel S.G. Tsipelev, and engineers led by Colonel

I.I. Tuva.
Courageously fought - A.I. Rodimtsev bu with
enemy aircraft (in the foreground)

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anti-aircraft gunners of the 29th anti-aircraft artillery division of colonel M.A. Vyalov, who covered the main grouping of the army while crossing the Oder and holding the captured bridgeheads. Two commanders of anti-aircraft artillery regiments: 1360 - Major A.A. Brykin and 1372 - Major I.P. Bedin, as well as the commander of the anti-aircraft machine-gun company of the 1360th regiment, senior lieutenant P. Ya. Anuchkin were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

During the crossing of the Oder, the engineering units of the army, led by the head of the engineering troops, General F.G. Podolynya. Sappers in icy water on rafts, boats transported equipment and people, built bridges. Many then remembered M. Stepanov - a balanced, calm person. Having passed the military path from Stalingrad, he was wounded twice, had ten military awards, including the Order of Glory of all three degrees. On the fiery night of January 24, he made forty-eight flights across the Oder and transported two hundred guardsmen with weapons and ammunition.

To the north of Breslau, the crossing of the Oder was carried out by formations of the 13th Army. On January 25, at the direction of the commander, they threw forward the mobile ranks. They included: a rifle battalion, an anti-tank artillery regiment or division, several tanks and self-propelled guns, a sapper company or a sapper battalion. By the end of the day, these detachments, having made a throw of 20-30 km, reached the Oder in the areas of Keben, Hochbauschwitz and Tarksdorf. On the night of January 26, the crossing of the Oder began.

The main forces of the 13th Army, carrying out the tasks assigned to them, continued to pursue those retreating beyond the river. Oder scattered enemy groups. The Germans, with the support of reserves, tried to hold back the advance of the advancing troops in individual settlements. So, to cover the fortifications along the old state border in the zone of the 13th army, the 205th infantry battalion of the Volksturm advanced against Nick

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and transferred from Germany the 269th infantry division, which had a task, relying on a strong support unit

resistance of Gross Wartenberg and fortifications on the border, to stop the advance of the Soviet troops. As a result of the battle in this area, the 205th battalion of the Volksturm was defeated, and the 489th regiment of the 269th infantry division suffered heavy losses.

The struggle for bridgeheads in the zone of the 13th Army took place in a difficult situation. To the breakthrough site, the enemy threw up reserves in order to dislodge parts of the army from the bridgeheads and restore defenses along the western bank of the river. Oder. By the end of January, the 76th Infantry Division, the remnants of the 6th, 214th, 313th and 45th Infantry Divisions, the 20th Motorized, 16th and 17th Panzer Divisions (without tanks), battle groups Rüger and Dench, 21st, 253rd, 472nd security battalions, 32nd training regiment, 1st Volkssturm battalion, 11th non-commissioned officer school, 34th training battalion, tank, two mechanized and one artillery regiment of the 14th Panzer Division. The total number of forces that the enemy had in this sector was about 19 infantry battalions, 40 self-propelled guns, 52 tanks and 75 armored personnel carriers.

The troops on the bridgehead had to repulse up to a dozen counterattacks by infantry and tanks supported by aircraft every day. Since the captured lines were immediately fixed, and enemy reserves were brought into battle in parts, the infantrymen and tankers, with the support of aviation, escort artillery and long-range artillery from the eastern bank of the Oder, albeit slowly, but moved forward.

In the first days of the battles for the bridgeheads, a particularly difficult situation developed in the sector of the 27th Corps of Major General F.M. Cherokmanov, who captured the parade ground south of Steinau. He fought on a wide front and, repelling strong German counterattacks, at one time was in danger of being thrown back behind the Oder. In similar conditions, the struggle of the 102nd

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corps (commander Major General I.M. Puzikov), which captured and held a bridgehead north of Steinau. In order to firmly consolidate and expand the captured bridgeheads, on January 28, General N.P. Pukhov brought into battle the 24th Corps, which had previously been in the second echelon, and set it the task of driving the Germans out of Steinau. After three days of intense fighting, the city fell.

The bridgeheads north-south of Steinau were expanded after its capture and merged into

one bridgehead up to 30 km along the front and up to 16 km in depth. By January 31, at the line of Barch-Kulm, Raudten, Malmitz, Klaptau, Bilvise, two rifle corps of the first echelon of the army and part of the forces of the 24th corps were fighting. One reinforced division of the 27th Corps fought on a separate bridgehead, holding the line of Alt-Lest, Koitz, Rausse, Kamez. Despite all efforts, the enemy failed to dislodge the Soviet troops from the bridgeheads. In early February, the 13th Army was firmly entrenched in its positions.

Fierce fighting went on in the zone of the neighboring 52nd Army. On January 23, the 73rd Rifle Corps of Major General S.S. Martirosyan, advancing on Yols, repelled six counterattacks from units of the 17th Panzer and 269th Infantry Divisions. Intense fighting continued here all day on January 24, and only on January 25 did the enemy leave the city. In the battles for the city, the Germans lost a large number of soldiers and officers, 32 tanks were destroyed, and up to 150 aircraft were captured at the airfield near the city. The advance of the right flank formations of the 52nd Army was accompanied by the continuously growing resistance of the Germans. As expected, the most intense fighting took place on the outskirts of Breslau.

N.P. Pukhov

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Warsaw. Liberation flag

By January 26, German formations were operating in front of the army front, created from the remnants of the 6th, 10th, 214th infantry divisions, Volkssturm detachments, units and subdivisions of the 5th, 16th, 19th, 25th tank divisions, 10th, 20th th motorized divisions and motorized divisions "Brandenburg", the remnants of the 42nd army corps (32, 88, 291, 342nd infantry divisions), units of the 168th infantry and 603rd special purpose divisions and a number of other special units and subdivisions. Serious battles with these units took place on January 27 in the area of Kobylin and Boyanovo, and on January 27-28 - west of Domakhovo.

By the end of January 28, the left-flank 76th Rifle Corps (commander Major General M.I. Glukhov), bypassing a large group of Germans in the Gurau area, reached the Oder in a sector 2 km east of Keben, with two regiments of the 389th Rifle Division on assistants means crossed the Oder and wedged into the enemy defenses along the western bank of the river to a depth of 5 km, occupying Rosterdorf, Steidelwitz. The next day after the advance units crossed the Oder to the western bank

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two rifle divisions of the 76th corps had already crossed the river. The enemy fiercely resisted, trying to prevent further expansion of the bridgehead.

By January 30, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached the Trebschen, Rausse, Seiffersdorf, Oppeln, Kranlitz, Rybnik line, crossing the Oder (Odra) River in the Raudten districts, south of Breslau, Oppeln. The February offensive battles of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front ended with the right wing of the front reaching the Neisse River and seizing bridgeheads on its left bank. The troops of the center of the front by this time had reached the foothills of the Sudetes, and the troops of the left wing continued to fight to overcome the Oder fortified line south of Oppeln. At the end of February, enemy resistance increased sharply. This was explained by the fact that the enemy troops in this direction were reinforced by the regrouping of units and formations from Czechoslovakia. The stubborn resistance of the fascist German troops was also facilitated by the highly developed defense in terms of engineering, based on a large water frontier - the Oder River. In view of this, an attempt to overcome the Oder fortified line south of Oppeln on the move and transfer military operations to the region of Upper Silesia was not successful. There was a need to prepare and conduct a new offensive operation.

The tasks of reaching the Oder (Odra) and forcing it in the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front were successfully solved. On January 26, his tank armies approached the old German-Polish border, despite the fierce resistance of the enemy, the 2nd Guards Tank Army crossed the border that day and broke through the Pomeranian Wall on January 28. Following the tankers, the 61st and 5th shock armies advanced. The path to the Oder north of the Warta River was open. On January 29, the troops of the 1st Guards Tank, 8th Guards, 69th and 33rd Armies entered the territory of Germany, breaking through the Mezeritsky fortified area. In those days, the feat of the tankers of the 44th Guards Tank Brigade, which operated in the forward detachment of the 11th Guards Tank Corps, became widely known.

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1st Guards Tank Army. Having overtaken the retreating Nazi units, the brigade reached Hochwalde, a strong stronghold of the Meseritz fortified region. With the onset of darkness, the brigade, without waiting for the approach of the main body of the corps, with a daring attack broke through the enemy's defenses, on January 30 went to his rear and two days later captured a bridgehead on the Oder in the Geritz area. For heroism, the entire personnel of the brigade

was awarded state awards, 11 soldiers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and the brigade commander, Colonel I.I. Gusakovskiy was awarded the second Gold Star medal.

In connection with the approach to the Oder, the Military Council of the front reported to the State Defense Committee and the Supreme Commander-in-Chief: "Your order - to defeat the enemy grouping opposing the troops of the front with a powerful blow and swiftly reach the line of the Polish-German border - has been carried out. For 17 days of offensive battles, the troops of the front covered up to 400 km. The whole western part of Poland in polo

all of the 1st Belorussian Front was cleared of the enemy, and the Polish population, which had been oppressed by the Germans for five and a half years, was liberated. The rapid advance of the troops prevented the Nazis from destroying cities and industrial enterprises, railways and highways, did not give them the opportunity to steal and exterminate the Polish population, to take out livestock and food. Having carried out, together with the troops of the 1st Ukrainian and 2nd Belorussian fronts, your order to rescue our Pole brothers from fascist captivity, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front are determined to achieve in the shortest possible time, together with the entire Red Army, a complete and final victory over Hitler's Germa niei.

The entry of the Red Army into the territory of Germany caused a commotion in the camp of the enemy. On January 25, the Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, General G. Guderian, met with Foreign Minister I. Ribbentrop and, after reporting on the situation on the fronts, suggested that he take steps to conclude a unilateral truce with the Western powers. Guderian sought to carry out the long-cherished plan of concentrating all the forces of the Wehrmacht against the Red Army.

He remembers - the
commander of the 1st Guards
Tank Army, Colonel General M.E.
Katukov:

"Ahead was the Oder! 3 that
night before the decisive thrust
to the main line of the German
defense, in terms of the degree of
tension, was close to the January
night that preceded the entry of tank
troops into the breakthrough. It was
the 18th day of the offensive. At the
hour of the exit of tank formations to
M.E. Katukov initial lines are recorded

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there is a figure on the speedometers of all cars. Although there were 500 kilometers in a straight line from the Vistula to the Oder, the speedometers of the tanks showed 700 kilometers: the combat situation did not always allow going in a straight line. With their fearlessness and skill, the guards broke the usual norms, increasing the survivability of military equipment. No matter how tired the people are, but if the commanders of the forward detachments, constituting the tip of the tank wedge, were told that they would be replaced, that other units would make this throw across the Oder, they would be deeply offended!

Military history has not yet known examples when a powerful fortified area was broken through by a tank army. Typically, fortifications of this kind were destroyed by heavy artillery fire and aviation from the air, and only then sappers and rifle units completed the destruction of pillboxes and bunkers.

The front set a difficult task for us! Under other conditions, the order would have seemed impossible, but now the offensive momentum of the troops was so high that any most difficult task seemed to be up to the tankers. True, the matter was complicated by the fact that at such a rapid pace of advance, the rear was always lagging behind with a supply of fuel. But here you found a way. P.G. Dyner suggested using trophy alcohol for wheeled vehicles, and the rear units managed to supply us with diesel fuel.

On January 31, the 2nd Guards Tank and 5th Shock Armies advanced forward to the Oder northwest of Kustrin, crossed the river and captured a bridgehead in the Kinitza area. South of the Oder, the 8th Guards, 69th, 1st Guards Tank, 33rd armies came out. A threatening situation developed on the right wing of the front. As a result of the rapid withdrawal of troops to the Oder and the offensive of the main forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front to the north, to East Prussia, a gap formed between them, which reached 40 km. To cover it, Marshal G.K. Zhukov singled out two divisions of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, which was in the second echelon after the liberation of Warsaw. Further

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the gap increased, and on January 27 the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front was provided by the 47th and 61st armies, advancing in a northwestern direction.

From 1 to 3 February, intense fighting continued on both banks of the Oder. During these battles, all enemy troops remaining on the eastern bank of the Oder and

those who tried to hold on to the border fortifications were defeated and for the most part destroyed. On February 3, the entire eastern bank of the Oder in the offensive zone of the front was cleared of enemy troops.

At the same time, fierce and intense battles were going on on the western bank of the Oder. Using all the available reserves and concentrating significant aviation forces here, the enemy tried at all costs to throw the Soviet troops off the western bank of the Oder and liquidate the bridgeheads captured there. The fascist German command quite clearly understood that in a short time these bridgeheads would become the springboard from which the Red Army would fall upon Berlin. However, despite repeated fierce attacks by enemy infantry and tanks, as well as air strikes by large air groupings, the Soviet troops not only completely held the captured bridgeheads, but during the fighting expanded them and firmly entrenched themselves on them.

In total, for the period from January 26 to February 3, i.e. during the struggle in the fortified border areas and beyond the river. Oder, the fascist German command regrouped seventeen divisions, including two tank and five motorized divisions, in the offensive zone of the 1st Belorussian Front, not counting a large number of separate battalions, regiments and various special units, military schools and formations hastily created on the spot , as well as divisions of the Volkssturm.

So, by February 3 - the last day of the Vistula-Oder operation - thirteen armies of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts reached the Oder. Was

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captured a number of bridgeheads. The largest of them was Kyustrinsky. From January 31 to February 3, the first detachments of the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies, the 5th Shock and 8th Guards Armies immediately took possession of two small footholds on the left bank of the Oder northwest and south of Kustrin (Kospshina). Heavy fighting went on for most of February.

The commander of the 9th Rifle Corps of the 5th Shock Army, Major General I.P. Tall:

HISTORICAL REFERENCE.

Tall Ivan Pavlovich (1902-1980). In the Red Army since 1924. He graduated from the infantry school in Kyiv, the courses "You shot", the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze. Member of the Soviet

Finnish war - commander of the 245th Infantry Regiment. Hero of the Soviet Union (March 21, 1940). During the Great Patriotic War he commanded a division, corps, army. Lieutenant general. Buried in Moscow. Memoir author.

“... Already in the morning of February 3, the enemy resumed violent attacks. More than fifty aircraft appeared in the air, which began to bomb the positions of the 1050th and 1052nd regiments of the 301st and 905th regiments of the 248th divisions. Following the air strike, the units came under artillery and mortar fire and were attacked by tanks. The battle took on a fierce character. What did not work yesterday, the enemy decided to do today. And this was understandable, because the very fact of the presence of Soviet troops on the western, Berlin side of the Oder testified to many things.

The strongest blow fell on the 1050th Rifle Regiment of Lieutenant Colonel I.I. Gumerov. The 1st battalion of this regiment could not resist the onslaught of superior enemy forces. If the battalion commander, Captain Lensky, was in the ranks, the battle could have turned out differently, but the battalion commander was wounded, and the units did not feel a firm, guiding hand. It was at this moment that the endurance and determination of the commander of the firing platoon, Lieutenant Nikolai Barkov, played a huge role. Despite being wounded, he confidently led the gun crews, which knocked out two German tanks with well-aimed fire and brought

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to the confusion of the infantry. The command of the battalion was taken over by the Komsomol organizer of the regiment Grigory Tsygankov, and soon the commander of the regiment Gumerov arrived here.

The 2nd Rifle Battalion, led by Captain Shapovalov, was attacked from two sides. For many hours he had to fight surrounded, to withstand a real siege. The “Republic of Shapov Lov” was dubbed by the fighters a small patch of land, shot through from all sides, in the center of which stood a solid stone house with outbuildings. The companies took up all-round defense, repulsed four attacks already. Everything would be fine, but the ammunition was running out.

Fyodor Kuzmich Shapovalov, a veteran of our corps, commanded a company back on Taman, where he received his first wound. Here, on the Oder, the 22-year-old captain felt the pulse of his battalion well, confidently led people. Shapovalov's battalion was at the limit of human strength. This was well understood by the commander of the neighboring battalion, Hero of the Soviet Union, Captain Alexander Fedorovich Bogomolov. His companies had just repulsed a hopeful attack. But Bogomolov saw that it was even more difficult for Shapovalov. And Captain Bogomolov decided to take a desperate step. He raised his last reserve in a counterattack and himself led it to the enemy. Bogomolov's tactical move turned out to be

just in time: the Nazis felt something was wrong in their rear and weakened the onslaught on the encircled. But Bogomolov did not know this, he was dying at that moment in the arms of Galina Fedorenko, who had come running to the rescue. The help promised to Shapovalov soon arrived. Units of the 1054th Infantry Regiment of Lieutenant Colonel N.N. Radaev. The enemy was pushed back. Shapovalov was now surrounded by his own, and, trying not to get away, he turned the battalion with the front to the west ... "

Recalls Marshal G.K. Zhukov:

"I cannot but say at least a few words about the heroic actions of the 5th shock army, headed by Lieutenant General N.E. Berzarin and a member of the Military Council, Lieutenant General F.E. Bokov. Huge merit

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ha in the capture of the bridgehead north of her Kustrina belongs to the advance detachment of the army. It was headed by the deputy commander of the 89th Guards Rifle Division, Colonel Kh.F. Esipenko. The detachment included the 1006th rifle regiment of the 266th rifle division, the 220th separate tank brigade headed by Colonel A.N. Pashkov, the 89th Separate Heavy Tank Regiment, the Antitank Fighter Regiment, and the 489th Mortar Regiment.

By the morning of January 31, the advance detachment crossed the Oder and captured a bridgehead in the Kinitz-Gross-Neuendorf-Refeld area. The appearance of Soviet troops 70 kilometers from Berlin was a stunning surprise for the Germans. At the moment when the detachment broke into the city of Kinitz, German soldiers were calmly walking around its streets, the restaurant was full of officers. Trains on the Kinitz-Berlin line ran on schedule, communications were working normally.

On the captured bridgehead, Colonel I.I. Terekhin, battalion commanders N.I. Kravtsov, P.E. Platonov and I.Ya. Cherednik, division commanders N.A. Zharkov and I.S. Ilyashchenko organized a solid defense. The soldiers and commanders understood that the Germans would make every effort to push the detachment back across the Oder.

On the morning of February 2, the enemy delivered a powerful artillery strike against the detachment's combat formations. Soon after

this appeared enemy aircraft. The area of the bridgehead shuddered from the explosions of bombs, shells and mines. The firestorm raged for about an hour. And then the Nazis, with the support of tanks from three sides, attacked the front line. The enemy, despite heavy losses, stubbornly climbed forward. His tanks even managed to break into the area

N.E. Berzarin

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firing positions of our artillery and suppress part of the batteries. A critical situation has arisen. The enemy tanks threatened to go behind the detachment, and then it was hardly possible to hold on to the captured line. It came to the fact that in the battery of Captain N.I. Kravtsov, only one anti-tank gun remained. His calculation under the command of senior sergeant N.A. Velsky entered into single combat with 8 enemy tanks. Five Nazi tanks were knocked out, the rest turned back.

During the attack, our soldiers managed to knock the enemy out of the trench and destroy two of his nodes of resistance. But soon, having come to their senses and concentrating their forces, the Nazis launched a counterattack, in one of the sectors they even managed to break through and push our company. However, the Germans did not manage to advance far. With a powerful blow, the soldiers of the 3rd battalion overturned them, and then successfully continued the offensive. For the courage and courage shown in this battle, I.F. Senichkin was awarded the Order of the Patriotic War II degree.

..As a result of many days of battles, the bridgehead was expanded to 44 kilometers. It was from him that the offensive of the shock group of the 1st Belorussian Front on Berlin began. By this time, on the right wing of the front, enemy resistance had increased significantly. Aviation and military reconnaissance established the approach and concentration of significant enemy forces in Pomerania.

To eliminate the danger looming from the north, quick and decisive action was needed. Already on February 2, the 1st Guards Tank Army received an order from the Military Council of the Front to transfer its sectors on the Oder to neighboring troops and to regroup northward to the Arnswalde region by a forced march. Tula also regrouped the 9th Tank and 7th Guards Cavalry Corps, a large number of artillery, engineering units and materiel.

The threat of a German counter-offensive from Eastern Pomerania increased day by day. January 31

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The military council of the front sent the following report to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief:

"1. Due to the sharp lag of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Front from the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front, the width of the front by the end of January 31 reached 500 km ... the enemy will certainly take active actions against the extended right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front. Please order K.K. Rokossovsky immediately attack with the 70th Army in the western direction, at least on a ledge behind the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front.

Zhukov
Telegin.

On February 8, the Headquarters of the Supreme Command set the task of the 2nd Belorussian Front to go on the offensive, defeat the enemy in Eastern Pomerania, capture Danzig and Vydym on the coast of the Baltic Sea. The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front began preparations for the East Pomeranian operation.

On February 3, 1945, the Vistula-Oder offensive operation ended, however, two rather strong enemy groupings remained in the rear of the 1st Belorussian Front - the garrisons of the cities of the Schneidemühl (Pile) and Poznan fortresses.

As early as January 26, the 2nd Guards Tank Army reached the distant approaches to Schneidemühl, a city located in the system of the so-called foreground of the German border fortifications in the eastern part of Normandy. According to intelligence, its garrison consisted of three separate infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, an Alarm battalion (a local Nazi organization), a sapper regiment, three Volkssturm battalions, an anti-tank division, up to 60 tanks and assault guns. The total number of the garrison reached 12,000 people.

The city was prepared in terms of engineering for all-round defense, had four defensive bypasses and a citadel. In the streets and squares were prepared

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we are barricades and blockages. Artillery firing positions were located in the basements of large buildings and semi-basements. The basis of the defense was an infantry battalion, which defended one or two quarters (250-300 meters along the front), having two companies in the first line, and one in the second echelon. A company, having six to eight hand guns

lemetov, twenty to thirty Panzerfaust hand-held anti-tank rifles, defended a group of houses. The platoon, having two or three light machine guns and ten Panzerfaust rifles, defended one or two houses. From the division, armed with a light machine gun and four or five Panzerfaust rifles, defended one or two apartments in the house. The infantry company allocated to the second echelon of the battalion was located in buildings prepared for defense inside the quarter.

On January 27, the 2nd Guards Tank Army was ordered, "bypassing Schneidemühl from the south, to break through the Pomeranian defensive area on the move and, bypassing the Mezeritsky fortification area from the north, go to the Oder River." The task of mastering Schneidemühl was entrusted to

By the enemy!

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suitable formations of the 61st and 47th armies. However, all attempts over the next three days to break through the outer defensive line of the fortress city were unsuccessful due to the fact that the formations of these armies had to repel counterattacks of the Netherlands Motorized Brigade and the 8th Police Division south and east of Schneidemühl. Leading the offensive to the north, the troops of the 47th and 61st armies, in cooperation with the 12th guards tank corps of the 2nd guards tank army, on February 1 surrounded the enemy in Schneidemühl. Formations of the 1st Army of the Polish Army, the 47th Army and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps completed the breakthrough of the positions of the Pomeranian Wall and deployed battles to the west of it. By February 3, the armies of the right wing of the front reached the line north of Bydgoszcz, Flatov. At dawn on February 3, the task of defeating the garrison of the Schneidemühl zone was given to the commander of the 47th Army, Major General F.I. Perkhovich. The following forces and means were allocated to the grouping for blocking and subsequent defeat of the enemy in Schneidemühl: commanded by colonels V.G. Chernov, M.M. Muzykin, I.R. Shargorodsky, 334th heavy tank regiment (commander lieutenant colonel F.A. Garashchenko), 1892 self-propelled artillery regiment (commander lieutenant colonel S.N. Korosyly). The commander of the army was subordinate to the 22nd breakthrough artillery division (commander Major General D.S. Zrazhevsky) consisting of cannon, howitzer, heavy howitzer brigades, as well as the 32nd mortar brigade under the command of Colonel L.N. Likhachev and the 41st Guards Mortar Brigade (commander Colonel E.I. Karelin).

Air support was provided by the 3rd bomber aviation corps of Aviation Major General A.Z. Karavatsky, 6th Fighter Aviation Corps, Major General of Aviation I.M. Dzusova, two aviation bombers and one fighter

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aviation division, as well as the 4th Polish mixed aviation division of Colonel A.S. Fomeiko.

Ten days were allocated for the preparation of the assault on the fortress city. Assault detachments and groups were created in rifle divisions. The basis of the assault detachment was the rifle battalion. It was reinforced by a tank company or a self-propelled gun battery, an artillery battalion, a mortar battery, flamethrower and engineer platoons, a platoon of anti-tank rifles, and a chemical squad. The assault group was formed on the basis of a rifle company. She received for reinforcement a tank platoon, a mortar company, an artillery battery, a flamethrower squad, and two or three chemists. February 5, General F.I. Perkhovich held a demonstration lesson in a specially equipped town, which was attended by the commanders of regiments and battalions, reinforcement units. He ordered similar exercises to be carried out in all the created assault detachments and groups.

In the following days, issues of interaction, organization of fire destruction of the enemy by artillery and aviation were worked out on the mock-up of the city. All commanders, up to and including the company commander, received Schneidemuhl's plans with a single numbering of quarters and the most important objects of the city. The engineering units worked hard, and their commanders held classes in all rifle battalions and artillery battalions. General D.S. Zrazhevsky, together with the head of artillery of the corps, Colonel M.I. Sakov worked out the issues of using guns and mortars during artillery preparation and combat in the city. Actions with aviation were especially carefully coordinated.

The political workers did a great deal of work with the personnel. Its forms were the most radical: individual conversations, meetings, rallies, newspapers and leaflets. Difficult tasks were solved by the rear units, which provided the soldiers with ammunition and food.

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Soviet tanks are fighting in the city of Poznan. February 1945

The assault on the city was scheduled for February 12. It was preceded by an air strike. More than 300 aircraft took part in it. Artillery preparation began at dawn and lasted 90 minutes. At 8 o'clock (the time the enemy had breakfast), assault detachments and groups rushed to the attack along the entire outer defensive contour. They were actively supported by artillery and aviation, dominating the air.

From the report of the artillery headquarters of the 125th Rifle Corps:

"... The assault began with the fire of supporting weapons, which suppressed targets predetermined by them, especially important tasks were assigned to guns put forward for direct fire. Artillery of assault detachments (45-mm, 76-mm regimental and divisional guns) was used to destroy long-term enemy firing points. 45-mm guns could fire from the upper floors of the captured buildings. They were used to destroy uncovered observed manpower, tanks, self-propelled artillery, as well as to repel counterattacks, fire at windows and embrasures ... Enough effect

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It was effectively used as part of assault squads and artillery of larger calibers. An ordinary brick building with a 122-mm projectile from a distance of 300-400 m made its way through. The complete destruction of a two-three-story building was achieved with 15-20 shells. At the same time, it was practiced that 122-mm howitzers were brought to firing positions (due to their low maneuverability) usually at night. They were most often installed behind the barricades opposite the object of assault. Moving them during the daytime battle was allowed as an exception. 152-mm gun-howitzers and 203-mm howitzers, as heavier systems, were used at direct fire, mainly to destroy especially strong enemy structures, as well as those buildings that could not be destroyed by smaller caliber artillery and engineering equipment. Concrete live shells of these systems could not only suppress enemy firing points, but also make breaches in buildings for the infantry to advance.

The tanks moved in the combat formations of the infantry, supporting it with fire along the streets, along the windows and loopholes of the houses. The distances between them were chosen so as to provide fire assistance to the tank in front. In the interests of protecting the vehicles from being thrown from the upper floors with grenades and bottles of combustible mixture, all hatches of the tanks were closed. Flamethrower tanks, under the cover of artillery, burned out the enemy, who had sat down in buildings and shelters. Self-propelled artillery mounts destroyed wooden

nye and stone buildings prepared by the enemy for defense, barricades. To support the tanks in battle, a group of submachine gunners and sappers (3-5 people) was attached to each of them, which, by observation, revealed enemy firing points and made target designations with missiles. The sappers cleared roads, cleared passages with explosives in barricades and stone walls. Directly behind each tank at a distance of 50-100 m, one or two antitanks moved.

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kov guns of direct fire, with which the infantry group attached to the tanks indicated the targets, ensuring the advance of the tanks. Often, direct-fire guns to new firing positions were brought up by tanks.

The use of tanks in street combat in most cases made it possible to shoot at bunkers and cellars, which played the main role in the assault on houses and objects (the possibility of a large angle of inclination of the gun). The control of tanks in battle was carried out by foot messengers from the observation posts of battalions, companies and by telephone from the observation posts of the regiments. The lack of radio stations in the tanks made it difficult to control.

Rifle subunits, under the cover of fire from attached and supporting assets, advanced to the attacked building, burst into it through doors, windows and breaches in the walls, destroying the enemy with fire and grenades. Often the fight in the building turned into hand-to-hand combat. With the start of the battle inside the building, fire weapons transferred fire to the upper floors, attics and neighboring buildings in order to prevent the enemy from withdrawing and conducting counterattacks. The battle inside the building was carried out until the complete annihilation or capture of the enemy in it. Specially assigned groups of fighters, acting quickly and decisively, successively cleared every room, apartment and floor of the enemy. All locked doors were broken down or blown up. The transition from one floor to another was carried out by groups of fighters on stairs or through gaps in the ceiling. When moving up the stairs, the groups moved from one platform to another by throwing it, having previously fired at it and, if necessary, pelted it with grenades. Of particular importance was the use of hand grenades, point-blank fire, hand-to-hand combat. As a result, the battle became especially fierce. Physical strength, dexterity were brought to the fore

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each fighter, as well as the solidarity and clarity of the actions of the entire assault group.

The commander of the assault group (detachment) controlled the units from an observation post located in the immediate vicinity of the attacked object. Here was a representative of the tank regiment (battalion). Next to them were the firepower of the support subgroup. Communication with the units fighting inside the building was maintained through messengers and signals. Platoon and squad commanders were with their subunits and directly supervised their combat. After the battle, the captured building was inspected from the basement to the attic in order to clear it of the surviving enemy groups and clear mines. Then measures were taken to secure the captured object: observers were posted, a fire system was organized to repel possible enemy counterattacks.

The enemy resisted fiercely. The fighting continued both day and night. Only at dawn on February 14, a red flag was hoisted over the citadel. As trophy documents testify, more than 8 thousand soldiers and officers of the Wehrmacht were destroyed in the battle for Schneidemühl. About 700 people were taken prisoner. Moscow salutova

la the victors with twenty artillery volleys from two hundred and twenty-four guns.

The battles for Poznan, a city located on the western bank of the Warta River, were characterized by a greater scale of hostilities. It had a developed system of fortifications inside and outside the city and a powerful fortress "Citadel" in its northern part and was the largest center of resistance against

tivnik.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Poznan is the oldest city of Greater Poland, in the X-XT centuries the residence of the Polish princes. Since 1815, the center of the Poznan Grand Duchy. After the Poznań Uprising of 1918—

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1919 as part of the recreated Polish state. Since 1946, the center of the Poznań Voivodeship.

The construction of this fortified city dates back to 1870-1872. At the same time, the main defensive structures of the old fortress type were erected and the fortress itself was built. In the twentieth century, during the First World War, then in 1939, and especially during the Great Patriotic War, these structures were continuously improved and supplemented.

new in relation to the requirements of modern defense. The fortress "Citadel" was considered impregnable not without reason: in the entire history of its existence, no one managed to seize it, to penetrate its walls, surrounded by a wide and deep moat.

On January 22, formations of the 1st Guards Tank Army of the 1st Belorussian Front reached Poznan.

The commander of the tank troops, Colonel-General M.E., recalls it. Katukov.

"... Still on the way to Poznan, our scouts, led by Colonel A.M. Sobolev conducted a thorough reconnaissance of this fortified city. They captured the German lieutenant colonel Flakke, the deputy commander of the fortified area. He drew a detailed plan of the Poznan fortress with all its forts, reinforced concrete caponiers and other fortifications.

The all-round defense of Poznań consisted of three lines. The first passed along the outskirts of the city, the second - along Pilna Street to Zokach and the third, central, included the old part of the city and the citadel. On the outskirts of the city, all the buildings were adapted for defense: loopholes were punched in the walls, the windows were blocked with sandbags, the basements were connected by communications. The garrison of the fortress, according to Flakke, consisted of 20 thousand people. Later it turned out that 65,000 Nazis settled in the fortress.

"Poznan," Flakke said eagerly, "is the main center of defense along the Warta line. Another one passes to the west - along the Obra River, even further - a powerful fortification

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Parade of the Polish Army in honor of the liberation of Warsaw. January 1945

a captive area called Meseritsky. The area between the rivers Warta and Oder consists entirely of defensive structures and is called a fortified quadrangle.

Poznan was a typical tank "gas chamber". On its narrow streets, well prepared for defense, the Germans would have knocked out all our vehicles. Therefore, I ordered the commanders of the 11th Guards Tank Corps and the 8th Guards Mechanized Corps A.Kh. Ba Badzhanyan and I.F. Dremov to bypass Poznan from the north and south, closing the ring, cutting off all communications and preventing the Nazi garrison from leaving to the west. Jan 25-

the brigades of both corps crossed the Warta for the third time and surrounded Poznan. Around the city, tankers I.F. Dremov captured several airfields, on which there were a huge number of aircraft.

When I was told their number - 700, I doubted. We have never captured such a number of aircraft.

— Aren't the Dremovites exaggerating? I expressed my doubts to the chief of staff Shalin. - You know, it happens in a fever. Let's reduce the number at least to five hundred.

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As I expected, the staggering number of captured aircraft made a corresponding impression in Moscow. The Headquarters sent a special commission to check this unusual message, and it confirmed the initial figure: there were indeed more than 700 captured aircraft. In addition to the aircraft, the tankers seized a warehouse with medical equipment for surgical and dental offices.

On January 24, the advance detachment of the 69th Army under the command of Major General S.A. went to Poznan. Tikhon Chuka as part of the 68th tank, 12th self-propelled artillery brigade, 370th rifle division and part of the forces of the 8th anti-tank brigade. The garrison of the zones of Poznań is subordinated directly to the Reichsführer SS Himmler. From the outside, the city was surrounded by eighteen forts, one and a half kilometers apart from each other. Inside the city there were four forts of the citadel type, but smaller. The citadel is

Residents of Poznan welcome Soviet troops

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was the core of the fortress and was removed from the outer forts by five to eight kilometers. In the gaps between the forts were more than fifty pillboxes and bunkers. In front of the forts, along the entire outer contour of the city, an old anti-tank ditch ran. All this formed, in the words of the chief of staff of the army, General V.A. Belyavsky, a rather powerful defensive field.

An attempt to seize Poznan on the move with formations of the 69th, 1st Guards Tank and approaching 8th Guards Army was unsuccessful. Since January 26, the destruction of the garrison of the city-fortress, the commander

troops of the 1st Belorussian Front assigned to the 8th Guards Army as part of the 29th Guards Rifle Corps (27th Guards, 74th Guards, 82nd Guards, 39th Guards Rifle Divisions) and 28th Guards. rifle corps (30th guards, 117th and 312th rifle divisions), 11th guards. tank brigade, three separate tank, five separate self-propelled artillery regiments, four artillery divisions

Residents of Poznan meet Soviet troops.

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ziy breakthrough, two anti-aircraft artillery divisions, as well as artillery and engineering units. Air support was assigned to formations of the 16th Air Army (bomber, attack, fighter aviation corps, two assault, five fighter and mixed air divisions).

The commander of the 8th Guards Army, General V.I., tells about subsequent events in the Poznan region. Chuikov:

"First of all, they destroyed the grouping against Nick. We learned that the garrison of the city, together with the Volkssturm battalions, numbered up to 60 thousand people. Subsequently, the commandant of Poznan, General Mattern, testified that the garrison of the city consisted of two cadet schools, a reserve training division of assault guns, eleven battalions of internal security, airfield maintenance units, a training air regiment, two officer schools, two engineer battalions, the Lenzer combat group from local es esovtsy, seventeen companies, formed from soldiers of vacationers and soldiers of the 10th motorized 192nd, 6th and 45th infantry divisions, defeated in previous battles. The entire group was commanded by Colonel Connel. He took over the garrison from Police Major General Mattern, who had been removed from this position for lack of combat experience. Mattern remained in Poznan, assisting the new commandant of the fortress. On the eve of our approach to the Poznan fortifications, Connel received the rank of general.

The all-round defense of the city was divided into four sections - "East", "South", "West", "North". The eastern sector was commanded by Connel himself, the southern sector by Major Holdfeld, the western sector by the former deputy head of the 5th officer school, Major Everest, and the northern sector by Major Schrez.

Fulfilling the will of Hitler, the command of the garrison decided to hold the city to the last soldier. Except

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forts, pillboxes, bunkers, residential buildings and other buildings were adapted for street fighting. There were many warehouses with weapons, various ammunition and food in the city, which allowed the garrison to conduct long battles in conditions of complete encirclement.

Adapting the fortress to the tactics of modern warfare, German military specialists dug anti-tank ditches in the tank-prone areas around the city, created field firing positions with the calculation of clearing roads and approaches to anti-tank ditches. Along the roads, the enemy equipped firing points located in a checkerboard pattern. They were equipped with anti-tank guns and heavy machine guns. Thus, on the Kurnik-Poznań highway, over a distance of 4 kilometers, we found up to 40 machine-gun cells. Behind the cells were firing positions for anti-tank guns with circular fire. All field structures were connected by a common fire system with the forts of the fortress located around the city ...

... The attack from the north on January 23 by units of the 39th Guards Rifle, with the powerful support of all available artillery, did not have much success. We did not attack from the west, deliberately leaving an exit here, hoping that the enemy would use it and move out of the fortress. But our calculations did not come true: the enemy was not going to leave the city. We realized that we would have to fight for Poznan. It was necessary to carry out the restructuring of battle formations, to revive the Stalingrad assault groups and detachments. Riflemen, sappers, flamethrowers, scouts, tankers, artillerymen, who were part of the assault groups, received their own specific tasks and, in close cooperation, destroyed one or another enemy center of resistance.

On January 28 we repeated the assault. In addition to the four divisions and reinforcements of the 8th Guards Army, two divisions took part in it, transferred to my subordinate

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from the 69th Army. To avoid unnecessary losses, on the eve of the assault, the Nazis were presented with an ultimatum with the following content:

"To the officers and soldiers of the encircled garrison of the city of Poznan. The city of Poznań is surrounded and there is no way out for you. I, General Chuikov, suggest that you not slowly lay down your arms and surrender. I guarantee

I promise you life and return to your homeland after the war. Otherwise, you will be destroyed and, through your fault, many inhabitants of the city of Poznan will die along with you.

Raise the white flags and march boldly in the direction of our troops.

General Chuikov.

We did not see white flags. I had to convince the enemy by force of arms. Artillery and aviation carried out strikes on fortifications (we did not touch urban structures). Tanks acted together with infantry units. We did not spare shells from the captured trophy stocks. All ground structures of Fort "Citadel" were swept away from the face of the earth. The garrisons of the forts huddled in underground dungeon mats. Our assault groups and detachments received batteries of heavy guns with a caliber of 152 and 203 millimeters for reinforcement.

By February 5, the assault groups completely cleared the residential areas of the city from the enemy. The citadel, the eastern part of the Schuling region, Khvalishchevo and Glovio were still under siege. On this day, it became known that near the neighbor on the right - the 61st Army - in the area of the Schneidemuhl (Pile) fortress, the enemy's weapons garrison suddenly attacked the blocking troops with all their might. The 11th Tank Brigade was taken from the 8th Guards Army to liquidate this sortie. To prevent such attempts on the part of the Poznań garrison of the enemy, we intensified the night actions of the assault

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groups, and the exits from the forts and ravelins were tightly blocked by artillery fire.

After February 12, the main attention was focused on the Citadel - the center of defense of the Poznań garrison. As our troops approached this center, the stubborn resistance of the enemy increased. One might think: why did you have to fight hard for the Citadel, wouldn't it be better to block it and starve it out? The fact is that next to the Citadel there was a railway junction, which was extremely necessary for the supply of supplies to all the troops of the front. Therefore, the assault on the Citadel continued until the complete elimination of the enemy in it.

In the Citadel itself, about 12 thousand soldiers and officers were hiding, led by two commandants - the former commandant General Mattern and the seasoned Nazi General Konnel. It was located on a hill, dominated the city. Forts and ravelins were

covered with a three-meter layer of earth. The approaches to the inner forts and ravelins were covered by a wide and deep moat. This ditch was shot through by flank fire from the casemates through loopholes, invisible from the side of the attackers. The walls of the moat, 5-8 meters high, were lined with bricks. Tanks could not overcome this obstacle. Heavy weapons were brought to their aid. From a distance of three hundred meters they hit the Citadel. But even 203-mm shells, hitting the walls, did not cause much destruction, and, falling into the rash above the ceilings of the forts and casemates, left only funnels.

The general assault, which began on February 18, lasted four days non-stop, day and night. Flamethrowers were fired into action. However, it was not possible to suppress firing points with the help of knapsack flamethrowers. The flamethrowers were unable to crawl to the edge of the ditch, and a jet of fire mixture launched from a distance of 20-25 meters did not give any practical results. Then it was decided to use barrels of explosives. Under cover of fire

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5-6 sappers from Khotyn crawled such a barrel to the edge of the ditch, set fire to the fuse and pushed it towards the embrasures. The explosion deafened the Nazi machine gunners. Taking advantage of the weakening of the fire, the sappers lowered ladders into the ditch and built a crossing. The infantrymen climbed the ramparts by ladders and dug in on its southern slope, and in some places even on the ridge itself.

At 4 pm on February 19, the sappers were given the task of throwing a bridge across the fortress moat, along which regimental artillery could pass. It was decided to build a bridge on gantry supports against breaches in the wall and shaft, pierced by artillery of great power. With the onset of darkness, the sappers brought pre-prepared parts of the bridge to the ditch, but soon the work was interrupted, as the enemy continuously fired at the gap with faust cartridges and machine guns. A new decision is quickly made. As a result of a powerful explosion, redoubt No. 1 fell silent for a while. Sappers took advantage of this. In the dark they built a bridge. True, it did not last long. The enemy destroyed it. By the morning of February 21, the bridge was restored. At noon, they started building a three-ton bridge for tanks ...

It was the eve of the Red Army Day. Despite the heavy fighting, people had a pre-holiday mood, it was supported by a premonition of an imminent victory. On the evening of February 22, corps and division commanders gathered in one of the rooms of the city theater.

At this time, the commander of the 74th Guards Rifle Division, General Bakanov, was called to the telephone. Returning, he reported that they called from the central gate

Citadels. The parliamentarians arrived there. Bakanov asked permission to go and receive them. Soon he reported that the garrison of the fortress was surrendering and that the former commandant of the fortress, General Mattern, was near him. A quarter of an hour later, Major-General Mattern entered the room in which we were sitting, puffing like a steam locomotive and barely squeezing his way in. It was a carcass of eight pounds. Recovering his breath, he handed me a note from the commandant

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the fortress of General Connel, who asked the Soviet command to help the wounded.

"Where is Connel himself?"

- Shot himself.

When I asked how General Mattern felt, he shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't care, I'm not a member of the Nazi Party, I wouldn't shed blood in vain, knowing the hopelessness of resistance. Hitler kaput!"

Mattern said that out of 60,000 German soldiers and officers who were in Poznan, about 12,000 remained capable of combat. They surrender to the mercy of the conqueror. In total, 23,500 soldiers and officers were captured in the battles for Poznan. Large trophies were captured.

On the day of the glorious twenty-seventh anniversary of the Red Army - February 23, 1945 - the capital of our Motherland celebrated the victory of the Soviet troops in Poznan with 20 volleys from 224 guns.

So, the last battles and battles have ended in the territory where the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, with the assistance of the formations of the 20th Belorussian and 4th Ukrainian fronts, successfully carried out the Vistula-Oder operation.

Chapter 9

COMPONENTS OF SUCCESS.
MISTAKE AND ERRORS

The major military and political success achieved by the Soviet troops in the Vistula-Oder operation, of course, was natural. Its components were the measures taken during the preparation of this strategic operation, as well as the high level of skill in the use of forces and means in the course of battles and battles against an experienced enemy, the plan

which boiled down to, relying on the strong fortified regions of East Prussia and the system in the Vistula-Oder (Odra) interfluvium, to prevent the Red Army from advancing to the west, thereby solving political problems.

In preparing the Vistula-Oder operation, one of the factors that contributed to achieving success was the plan of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for the first stage of the 1945 campaign, which was based on the idea of conducting simultaneous, coordinated offensive operations in several directions, that is, going on the offensive. in the strip from the Baltic to the Carpathians, in which eight out of ten front-line formations deployed on the Soviet-German front participated. It was decided to strike the main blow on the central (Berlin) on

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rule, where the enemy grouping was the most dense and its defeat ensured the greatest military and political results, created the conditions for the speedy end of the war. VGK rate. skillfully solved one of the main tasks - the coordination of the forces and means involved in the offensive, paying great attention to improving the conditions for achieving the goals set by the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 10th Ukrainian fronts.

Firstly, it was decided to divert part of the enemy forces from the central direction to the flanks of the Soviet German front. To this end, back in October 1944, an operation began in East Prussia, the offensive continued in Courland and Hungary. Both of these directions were very sensitive for the enemy. He quickly reacted to the offensive of the Soviet troops. During October-December 1944, the fascist German command grouped 18 divisions (including 8 tank divisions) and 3 brigades from the center to the flanks, and additionally sent only 8 divisions (including 2 tank divisions) here. Consequently, the grouping of fascist German troops during this time in the Berlin direction was reduced by 10 divisions (of which 6 were tank divisions) and 3 brigades. The Wehrmacht command was forced to send its main reserves (23 divisions and 5 brigades) to Hungary, which did not allow it to fully compensate for the forces that it had withdrawn from the central sector of the Soviet-German front.

Secondly, during the preparation of the operations, major regroupings of troops were carried out from the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command from the fronts operating in the Baltic and in the north. So, the 61st Army arrived in the 1st Belorussian Front from the 1st Baltic Front, the 3rd Shock Army from the 2nd Baltic Front, three heavy self-propelled artillery regiments from

Leningrad Front and three regiments from the Stavka Reserve. During this time, about 500 new tractors and 1000 vehicles were delivered to the front. By decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, part of the long-range formations was transferred to the fronts

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Finished the war!

aviation, as well as the 20th, 51st and 74th anti-aircraft artillery divisions.

Thirdly, the Soviet command concentrated in the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts deployed in a 480-kilometer strip (22% of the length of the Soviet-German front), about a third of the personnel, artillery and mortars, as well as aircraft, over half of the tanks and self-propelled guns of the active army. Such a massing of forces and means made it possible to create high densities, deliver powerful initial blows, and subsequently build up efforts during the operation.

Fourthly, according to the decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, in the defeat of the Warsaw grouping of the enemy, the 1st Belorussian Front was assisted by the 2nd Belorussian Front, which was tasked with part of the forces of the left wing to strike around Modlin from the west and be ready to force the Vistula. The left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front was provided by the 38th

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army of the 4th Ukrainian Front, which part of the forces carried a blow to Krakow.

Finally, the idea of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command regarding the final operations in the western strategic direction was finally formed as early as November 1944. The advance determination of the strategic plan made it possible for the fronts to think through all operational-strategic, political and material questions with particular care, and to carry out operational camouflage measures in order to achieve a surprise transition to the offensive.

Taking into account the totality of political, economic and other factors, as well as the tasks set by the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, the front commanders approached the choice of the direction of the main attack and the massing of the available forces and means very creatively.

The delivery of the main blow by the 1st Byelorussian Front from the Vistula bridgeheads ensured a quick

the pace of the operation and the withdrawal of troops in the shortest possible time to the rear of the enemy. Thus, the defeat of the entire Warsaw-Radom grouping of the enemy and the liberation of the capital of Poland - Warsaw could be achieved. Choosing the direction of the main attack by the 1st Ukrainian Front | The Sandomierz bridgehead created an opportunity for its troops to cut through the main forces of the enemy's 4th Panzer Army and withdraw the main front grouping to the Oder (Odra). With access to the Oder in the region of Breslau, the main forces of the front cut off the fascist German grouping of troops in the south from the central regions of Germany and created the threat of a strike by Soviet troops on Berlin from the southeast.

The operation is characterized by a resolute massing of the strength of means in the directions of the main attacks of the fronts. In order to break through the defense in depth in the direction of the main attacks of the fronts, powerful strike groups were created. On the 1st Belorussian Front, the strike force included 78% of combined arms formations, 90% of armored troops and 75% of artillery; on the 1st Ukrainian Front - 78% of combined arms

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formations and up to 90% of tanks and artillery. Frontal breakthrough sectors accounted for 15 per cent of the total width of offensive zones. More than 75 percent of combined arms, up to 90 percent of tank and mechanized formations and formations, almost 90 percent of artillery and the main aviation forces were concentrated on them. Such a concentration of forces and means made it possible to create a significant superiority over the enemy in both infantry and for artillery and tanks. The average operational density of tanks and self-propelled artillery units per 1 km of the breakthrough front was 77-115 units on the 1st Belorussian Front, and 98-122 on the 1st Ukrainian Front. The artillery density was 232 on the 1st Belorussian Front, and 250 guns and mortars per 1 km of the breakthrough front on the 1st Ukrainian Front.

By decision of the commander of the troops of the 10th Belorussian Front, the enemy defense was penetrated in three sectors with a total length of 34 km, which was 13 percent of the entire offensive zone. The main data on the planning of army offensive operations are given in Table 10. They also testify to the military degree of massing of forces and means. Breakthrough areas comprised from 13 to 30 percent of the offensive zone, which made it possible to create densities per 1 km of up to 282 guns and mortars, up to 29 tanks and self-propelled guns.

By decision of the commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the breakthrough of the enemy defenses was carried out in one sector with a length of 39 km, which

set 15.6 percent of the offensive zone (250 km). The massing of forces and equipment made it possible to create an artillery density of 223-296 guns and mortars and up to 25 tanks and self-propelled units of direct infantry support per 1 km of the breakthrough area.

Basic information on planning military offensive operations on the 1st Ukrainian Front is in Table 11. From the data presented in it, it follows that

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that the offensive zones of the 5th Guards, 13th and 52nd armies, operating in the direction of the main attack, coincided with the breakthrough sectors, while the breakthrough sectors of the 3rd Guards and 60th armies made up 3-10 percent of the zone offensive.

Both fronts had a deep operational formation, as evidenced by the data in Table 11. It is typical that mobile groups were formed in five out of thirteen armies, which created favorable conditions for increasing the pace of the offensive.

The 1st Belorussian Front had seven combined arms armies and two tank corps in the first operational echelon, and one combined arms army in the second echelon. In the echelon of development of success (the mobile group of the front) were two tank armies and two cavalry corps. The combined arms armies of the front were built in one echelon. Such a construction of armies was determined primarily by the limited

along the depth of the Magnushevsky and Pulavsky bridgeheads and the desire to achieve a strong initial blow.

The 1st Ukrainian Front had six combined arms armies and three tank corps in the first operational echelon, and two combined arms armies in the second echelon. The mobile group consisted of two tank armies. The commander's reserve included one mechanized and one cavalry corps. General military armies had the operational formation of one, two and three echelons, depending on the tasks being solved, their role and place in the front-line operation.

Rifle formations had a deep battle formation. In the rifle corps, in the second echelon or in reserve, there was a rifle division. Second echelons were created in rifle divisions and rifle regiments. Such opportunities arose as a result of the fact that rifle corps, as a rule, received a significant amount of reinforcements, some of which were transferred to battalions and companies, created by attack demonstration platoons.

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As follows from the data given in Table 12, rifle corps were strengthened primarily by tank, self-propelled artillery regiments (heavy and light), minesweeper tanks, artillery formations and units, including anti-tank, engineering assault battalions. They were supported by tank brigades, artillery formations and units, including guards mortars, and anti-aircraft artillery regiments. All this increased the independence of the actions of rifle corps.

The operation is characterized by the organization of close interaction between the fronts participating in the Vistula-Oder operation. To this end, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command determined intermediate lines, which the troops of the fronts were supposed to reach during the operation at a precisely appointed time and thereby reliably secure their internal flanks.

Particular attention was paid to the organization of interaction in the liquidation of the enemy's flank groupings. In order to quickly destroy the enemy's Radom grouping, they carefully

Table 12
STRENGTHENING MEANS OF SHOOTING BODIES

And

Connections. Attached Supported the army
and the front ria Ader: 89th sk
61st A 85th TP, 1811th self-propelled | 1st and 136th April, 41st Guards.

1st Belorussian
Front

ny ap, 163rd iptap

minp, api 120-mm mortars; 150th,
171st and 207th SD, artillery 119 UR
11th Guards. tbr.

29th guards sk 351st heavy self-350th paws, 270th minp,

8th Guards
A of the 1st
Belorussian Front

moving ap, 1200 and 1504. light
self-propelled ap, 182 labr,
24 and 46 minbr, 74th artillery
guards. sd, two companies of the
166th tp of minesweepers,
9th engineering assault
battalion, 261st osb

79th Guards. Minb, 36th Guards.
minbr (M-31), 26th tminbr, 38th iptabr
(without regiment), 184th gabr,
BM, 186th gabr, 32nd hell OM, 43rd
pabr,

1st pope, 297th zenap

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planned and coordinated according to the place and time of the troops of the 33rd Army of the 1st Belorussian Front, 3rd Guards. and the 6th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front in their general offensive against Shidlovets. Taking into account the possibility of the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front lagging behind the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front due to the difficult conditions of the mountainous and wooded terrain, the Supreme Command demanded that the 1st Ukrainian Front strike with the forces of two armies along the northern bank of the Vistula in the general direction of Krakow and under favorable conditions to seize it, although Krakow was part of the borders of the 4th Ukrainian Front.

The methods of organizing interaction on the front and army scales were very diverse. One of them is the definition of the foundations for coordinating efforts

ley on maps when setting tasks for armies and commanders of troops. The chief of staff worked out and brought to the attention of subordinate headquarters a table of signals, methods of maintaining communication. Another method of organizing interaction, which is especially widely used by the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, is the departure of a group of staff officers and a representative of aviation to the NP of the armies, where the issues of coordinating efforts at the stages of breaking through the enemy's defenses, bringing frontline and army mobile units into battle were clarified. groups.

The construction of the battle order of the assault battalions had its own characteristics. So, in the 29th Guards Rifle Corps of the 8th Guards Army of the 1st Belorussian Front, each assault battalion operated at a front of up to 700 m. It had minesweeper tanks with sappers in front. At the time of the attack, the minesweeper tanks made passages in the minefields and barbed wire of the enemy. Following them in the chain, a company of auto-matchikov advanced with a part of heavy machine guns, supported by self-propelled artillery installations. Behind the company of automatchiks came the first rifle company with part of the 82-mm mortars and heavy machine guns, and behind it - the second rifle company with the rest of the 82-mm mortars, heavy machine guns, 45-mm and 76-mm regimental guns.

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diami. The assault battalions in their initial position occupied the first trench, and in the second trench, that is, 300-400 m, the rifle battalions of the first echelons of the rifle regiments were located in readiness to support and build on the success of the assault battalions. In the 29th Rifle Corps, the assault battalions, which went over to the attack at 8 o'clock. 55 min. On January 14, 1945, those advancing after the barrage, already at 9 o'clock captured the first, and then the second trenches of the enemy's first defense position. As a result, favorable conditions were created for bringing the main forces into battle, and artillery preparation was not carried out according to the full schedule. Using the success of the assault battalions, after a 10-minute powerful artillery fire attack at 10 o'clock, the main forces of the corps went on the offensive, which by 11 o'clock had completely captured the first position of the enemy's main line of defense.

One of the methods for coordinating efforts was the operational games (command and staff exercises) held at the beginning of December 1944 on both fronts, in which the commanders and members of the military councils of the armies, the chiefs of staff and commanders of the artillery of the armies, and the leading staff of the fronts took part. At this game, along with other issues, a lot of attention was paid to organizing the interaction of combined arms and air armies with tank armies when they were brought into battle, the issues of allocating routes for advancing

tank armies and the time of their release, clearing the terrain for the passage of tanks, ensuring the passage of formations of tank armies through infantry battle formations, organizing artillery support at the entry line. In addition, a procedure was worked out for expanding the penetration of the enemy defenses towards the flanks, organizing anti-aircraft cover in the area of entering the passage of the rear of tank armies. It was established how the cover of the tank army from the air would be organized, which air formations were allocated for this and which formations were reassigned to the tank army when it was brought into the gap, what means

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will be used to suppress enemy artillery in the zone of entry of the tank army and on the flanks, what aviation forces and means will be allocated to combat approaching enemy reserves, how control will be organized, especially assault aviation, where the commanders of assault aviation corps and divisions will be located. Three weeks before the start of the operation, the army commanders held the same exercises (games) with the commanders of corps and divisions, their chiefs of staff, and artillery commanders. During the exercises in the armies, the issues of breaking through the tactical defense zone were mainly coordinated. In formations and units, such exercises were carried out directly on the ground in the last five days before the offensive, where the actions of units and subunits were practiced when breaking through the enemy's main line of defense. Major measures were taken on both fronts to improve enemy reconnaissance. Night searches, ambushes, observation, eavesdropping, reconnaissance in force were widely used. Reconnaissance of the operational defense and the strategic depth of enemy territory was carried out by aviation and agents. As a result, the enemy's defense was opened to the full depth - from the Vistula to the Oder. The tactical defense zone was studied in particular detail. In order to preclude artillery and air preparation against abandoned or weakly defended enemy positions, the front commanders decided before attacking the main forces to carry out reconnaissance in combat by forward battalions. If in previous operations it was usually carried out the day before the start of the operation, now it was supposed to be carried out immediately before the offensive, which should have contributed to achieving the surprise of the strike of the main forces.

Much attention was paid to the fight against enemy undercover intelligence, which tried to reveal the grouping of troops and determine the plan of the Soviet command. In early January, only "Abwehrkommando-202" transferred over a hundred sabotage reconnaissance groups over the front line. Their liquidation was carried out in

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mainly troops of the NKVD, all of whose activities were carried out in accordance with the instructions of the military councils of the fronts. They maintained close ties with local party and democratic organizations that helped expose the enemy and his agents. An important role in the search for saboteurs was played by the rear guard units of the army in the field. By decision of the military councils of the fronts, they carried out the resettlement of local citizens from the 10-kilometer zone. A special regime was established in the 25-kilometer front line: outposts were set up, outfits were allocated, and special operations were carried out to clear the rear.

A positive impact on the achievement of success in the Vistula-Oder operation was played by the measures taken by the commander (commanders), headquarters and other command and control agencies to disrupt command and control, that is, the partial or complete disorganization of the leadership of the enemy command by subordinates on the battlefield. The goal was achieved in various ways.

One of them is the defeat (destruction) of elements of the command and control system in the incapacitation of command posts, nodes and lines of communication, in the destruction of enemy command personnel. This was achieved by the use of fire weapons and military formations for various purposes. For example, the actions of aviation of the 1st Ukrainian Front against the command post of the 4th German Tank Army on January 12 were very successful, as a result of which up to 30 percent of the command personnel were put out of action, the enemy lost up to 50 percent of communications equipment and support units. . The captured commander of the regiment of the 304th Infantry Division testified during interrogation: "I was amazed at how accurately the Russians knew the location of headquarters, command and observation posts, how skillfully the fire of guns and mortars was built, which led to the disorganization of control." Characteristically, in a number of cases, special artillery groups were allocated to destroy command posts, as was done in the 5th Guards Army, as a result of which the work of the headquarters

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The 48th Panzer Corps in the Busko-Zdrój area was destroyed. The task of destroying enemy nodes and lines of communication by forward detachments was actively solved.

The capture and incapacitation of various objects of the enemy command and control systems as a way of disorganizing the management of the combat activities of the enemy command has found wide application in the course of the pursuit of the enemy. Military intelligence officers were especially successful in solving problems, in particular,

reconnaissance groups operating behind enemy lines. According to the report of the headquarters of the 1st Belorussian Front, in the period from January 17 to 30, more than 130 officers of various headquarters were captured, 70 command posts of units and divisions of the 9th German army were put out of action. On January 18, a reconnaissance group of the 5th Guards Army captured a communications officer of the 17th Tank Division with a combat order, which allowed the formations of the 5th Guards Army to prepare timely response actions.

The suppression of radio communications, means of radar and radio navigation, as shown by the experience of the war, is an effective way to disrupt the command and control of troops, however, it found very limited use in the Vistula-Oder operation. To suppress enemy radio communications, special groups of suppression means were created at front-line communication centers. Aviation of the 2nd and 16th air armies, for example, used both active and passive interference with enemy radar equipment. In almost every aviation regiment, two or three crews were assigned to jamming. As they approached the radar zone, they threw out foil tapes, which, as they descended, hid the bombers from radar surveillance.

The psychological impact on the command staff of the enemy, on their thinking and will was very effective. To solve this problem, disinformation was used, that is, a deliberate misleading about upcoming actions, which in itself did not allow the opposing side to

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but assess the situation. In order to mislead the enemy, radio demonstrations and radio markings were widely used, especially when regrouping in the zone of the 1st Belorussian Front in the second half of January 1945. The work of the enemy troops, including command personnel, was carried out very actively. As a result, more than 70 thousand enemy soldiers and officers were captured in the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front during the operation, and about 15 thousand surrendered without resistance, more than 3 thousand defectors turned out to be, including almost 40 percent of the officers. Special propaganda had a serious impact on the Schneidemühl garrison in February 1945.

Of course, the measures taken to disrupt the command and control of enemy troops did not always give the expected result. However, their role in achieving success in the Vistula-Oder operation is obvious.

An essential component of the success of the operation was the careful organization of fire damage against

nickname, which includes the solution of a complex of issues. It is legitimate to refer to the main ones: the definition and clear formation of tasks for the forces and means involved in fire damage (artillery, aviation, air defense systems, tanks and self-propelled guns, engineering and chemical troops), the creation of their optimal grouping, primarily artillery, development of plans for artillery and aviation offensives, schedules for the use of means of fire destruction of military branches.

The artillery offensive plan at the stage of breaking through the enemy defenses indicated the artillery groups involved to solve problems during the periods of artillery preparation and artillery support, the types of fire, and the consumption of shells. With this increase in the specific gravity, a trend of massive fire raids was traced (up to 60 percent on the 1st Belorussian, up to 73 percent on the 1st Ukrainian fronts). The depth of destruction of the enemy by artillery fire due to the increase in ammunition and the approach of firing positions

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to the front edge (line of contact) increased to 8-10 km. A special place in the organization of fire engagement of the enemy in the offensive was given to planning rocket artillery fire as the most effective means for suppressing large (including fortified) objects and targets: strong points, artillery positions, reserves, command posts, etc. Headquarters Artillery developed detailed plans for the combat use, schedules and fire patterns of guards mortar units both for the period of an artillery offensive and for solving other specific tasks (for example, when moving mobile groups into battle). According to the experience of the 5th Guards Army, units of rocket artillery during the period of artillery preparation were planned to be used centrally. In the future, with the beginning of the infantry attack, rocket artillery was supposed to be reassigned to corps and divisions. The main document regulating the use of guards mortar units in an offensive operation was the table of fire worked out by the army artillery headquarters. An important place was given to counter-battery combat as an element of gaining and maintaining fire superiority over the enemy. The determining factor in the successful solution of this problem was the efficiency of reconnaissance of the enemy's fire system. In preparing the Vistula-Oder operation, the main role was played by ground artillery reconnaissance, which consisted of military and instrumental reconnaissance.

Troop artillery reconnaissance was organized and conducted almost continuously in all artillery formations, units and subunits by visual observation from ground observation posts and artillery patrols. Widely practiced

the inclusion of artillery scouts in the combined arms reconnaissance detachments and groups was ticked. Data from interrogation of prisoners, study of captured documents and equipment of the enemy were also used. An important role, as evidenced by archival sources, was played by artillery reconnaissance from ground observation posts.

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The most significant role among all types of artillery instrumental reconnaissance (AIR) in identifying an enemy artillery group was assigned to sound reconnaissance, with the help of which 117 fire enemy artillery positions, and in the 69th Army zone - 24 artillery batteries (60%). In the zone of the 5th shock army, sound reconnaissance managed to open 33 artillery batteries (91%). Sound reconnaissance, therefore, was the most effective of all means of artillery instrumental reconnaissance - it accounted for from 60 to 90% of the total number of enemy batteries reconnoitered by means of AIR.

The degree of effectiveness of fire damage was largely determined by the level of planning for an air offensive. In accordance with the decisions of the commanders of the fronts, the 16th and 2nd air armies covered the concentration of strike groupings on the bridgeheads and carried out aerial reconnaissance to the entire depth of the enemy's defense. With the beginning of the offensive, the air armies assisted the ground troops in breaking through the enemy defenses with massed attacks by ground attack and bomber aircraft. Significant aviation forces were intended to ensure the introduction of tank armies and corps into the breakthrough, support their operations in the operational depth, as well as to defeat the approaching reserves and retreating enemy troops.

In the plans for the combat use of aviation developed by the headquarters of the air armies, its actions were determined in particular detail during the preparation period and in the first two or three days of the offensive. In areas of defense breakthrough, it was planned to carry out aviation preparation for an attack by bomber and attack aircraft. Two hours before the start of the offensive, it was planned to deliver strikes against enemy command and observation posts, as well as communication centers with the aim of disrupting command and control. After that, aviation efforts switched to supporting and covering troops during

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tearing the tactical zone, ensuring entry into the battle

non-tank armies, escort and support of troops during operations in the operational depth. With the development of the offensive, aviation primarily provided for the operations of mobile groups of fronts and armies. For the successful accomplishment of missions, the air armies were reinforced at the expense of the Headquarters reserve. If on October 30, 1944, the 16th Air Army had 1236 aircraft, then by January 10, 1945 its composition was brought up to 2459 combat vehicles. The number of aircraft in the 2nd Air Army during the same time increased from 1534 to 2588.

Much attention was paid to the anti-aircraft cover of the troops, especially those on the bridgeheads. So, on the 1st Belorussian Front, the fire output of the anti-aircraft grouping of the Magnushevsky bridgehead was 34,000 rounds per minute, the Pulavsky bridgehead - 17,000. In most previous operations of 1943-1944, the fire output did not exceed 10-12 thousand rounds per minute. With the entry of troops to the Kutno-Lodz line, all military anti-aircraft artillery was removed from the rear facilities and regrouped into the battle formations of the advancing armies. It is characteristic that during the operation of the 1st Belorussian Front the number of anti-aircraft guns increased from 1806 to 2211. This happened in connection with the transfer to the front from the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the 74th and 20th anti-aircraft artillery divisions.

One of the components of the success of the Vistula-Oder operation was the purposeful work of logistics institutions, as a result of which the material reserves created at the fronts, even without taking into account the daily supply from the beginning of the operation, provided the troops both during the period of breaking through the enemy's defenses and during their actions in operational depth. If we take into account the need to change all the main railway lines on the territory of Poland from the European gauge to the all-Union gauge, the presence in the rear area of the armies of a large water barrier of the river. Vistula, limited in area bridgeheads and a large number of troops and equipment, it will become clear

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what enormous difficulties were overcome by the troops and logistics institutions in preparing the operation in logistical terms. Despite these difficulties, the rear coped with the tasks assigned to it completely.

Head of Logistics of the 1st Belorussian Front, Lieutenant General N.A. Antipenko, speaking in 1948 at the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze, recalled a remarkable episode that occurred during the Vistula-Oder operation. "... The troops of the front several times," emphasized Nikolai Alekseevich, "were honored with the high honor of the Kremlin volleys and orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief regarding the liberation of the large cities of Poland. Taki-

My orders and volleys marked the capture of Warsaw, Lodz, Gniezno, Poznan and other cities. The order usually listed the names of the commanders of the fronts and armies, their chiefs of staff and some of the chiefs of the combat arms of the front. But it was a complete surprise for me that in the January order of 1945, on the occasion of the capture of Gniezno, it was said that this city was liberated by the troops of generals such and such, including the troops of General N.A. Antipenko. I read and think: didn't you dream it? I called the chief of staff of the front, M.S. Ma Linin - isn't it a mistake? No, he says, not a mistake, let them know that the rear fought. Of course, I was not the only one who rejoiced at such an order; a huge team of home front workers rightfully took the praise personally.

Unfortunately, that was the only case during the war years ... "To be fair, it should be said that the names of the chiefs of the rear and the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts sounded in other orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in those days, in particular, in connection with the capture of the cities of Bydgoszcz (Bramberg), Hinderburg, Katowice, thereby determining the place and role of the rear in the Vistula-Oder operation.

In this regard, it is appropriate to remind the reader that in order to quickly mobilize all the forces of the country to repulse the enemy, to unite the efforts of the front and rear

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On June 30, 1941, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks and the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR decided to form the State Defense Committee (GKO), which would concentrate all power in the state in its own hands. I.V. was appointed chairman of the GKO. Stalin. Member of the State Defense Committee A.I. Mikoyan was directly responsible for providing the armed forces with fuel, food and clothing. Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks A.A. Andreev headed the management of the railway transport. In accordance with the decision of the State Committee of Defense at the end of July, the structure of the rear services of the Red Army was reorganized. People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR I.V. On July 30, Stalin approved the Regulations on the management of the rear of the Red Army in wartime and the scheme for organizing its bodies. In August, he also signed an order on the organization of the Main Directorate of Logistics of the Red Army, the rear departments of the fronts and armies, and the Regulations on these directorates. General A.V. was appointed head of the rear of the Red Army. Khrulev, while also remaining Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR. Major military workers who had extensive experience in command and control were appointed to the positions of chiefs of the rear of the fronts - deputy commanders of the troops.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

Khrulev Andrey Vasilievich.

Born on September 18 (30), 1892 in the village of Bolshaya Aleksandrovka, now in the Leningrad Region, then became a regular St. Petersburg proletarian - a mechanic at the Porokhov plant. A soldier of the First World War, a participant in the February and October revolutions, during the Civil War he fought in the First Cavalry Army. From this began his long journey of service in the Red Army. He held especially large posts in 1930-1939. - Head of the Central Military Financial Directorate, Head of Affairs of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR, Head of the Construction and Apartment Directorate of the Red Army, Head of the Kiev District Military Construction Directorate, Head of Glavvoenstroy under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, since October 1939 - Head of the Red Army Supply Directorate, from August 1940 - chief military quartermaster of the Red Army.

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In 1941-1945. Khrulev bore on his shoulders a truly titanic load of multifaceted and comprehensive work to supply the Red Army with everything necessary. As Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, he headed the Main Directorate of Logistics of the USSR Armed Forces, established by decision of the State Defense Committee (GKO) on August 1, 1941, and from March 1942 to April 1943 simultaneously served as People's Commissar of Railways of the USSR. In these important posts, Khrulev proved himself, according to Marshal G.K. Zhukov, as "an exceptionally energetic and experienced organizer." "The main, perhaps, defining feature of this military figure," wrote the former deputy commander of the 1st Belorussian Front for rear, Lieutenant General N.A. Antipenko, "was his ability to influence those most important and decisive sectors of the national economic life of the country, on the state of which the entire economy of the Soviet Union and the strength of the rear of the Armed Forces depended ... He never gave himself half to the cause. Either he didn't undertake it at all, or if he undertook something, he brought it to the end.

I.V. Stalin, according to his contemporaries, respected Khrulev for his inflexibility, courage, for his inability to please his superiors, even to the "Supreme" himself. Unfortunately, in the postwar years, A.V. Khrulev did not play such a prominent role as during the war, which is largely due to the unjustified arrest at the end of 1947 of his wife Esfira Samsonovna, who was fully rehabilitated in May 1953 after Stalin's death.

Army General A.V. Khrulev died on June 9, 1962. He was buried in Red Square near the Kremlin wall.

Issues of supplying the army were dealt with by N.A. WHO-

Nessinsky, A.N. Kosygin, A.I. Mikoyan and other prominent statesmen. The Committee for Food and Clothing Supply of the Red Army, formed on July 1, 1941 under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, included A.I. Mikoyan (chairman), A.N. Kosygin (Deputy Chairman), A.V. Khrulev, V.P. Zotov and S.G. Lukin. A.A. Andreev was responsible for the operation of railway transport and headed the All-Union Committee for the Service of the Wounded and Sick Soldiers of the Red Army. From the first days of the war, people's commissars provided great assistance in supplying the army: weapons - D.F. Ustinov, ammunition - B.L. Vannikov, food industry - V.P. Zotov, blanks - K.P. Subbotin, meat and dairy industry

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news - P.V. Smirnov, trade - A.V. Lyubimov, non-oil industry - I.K. Sedin, textile industry - I.N. Akimov, light industry - S.G. Lukin and many others.

What was the front-line rear during the Great Patriotic War?

This is a system of command and control bodies, forces and means intended for logistic support of troops, that is, the implementation of a set of measures aimed at meeting the material, transport, household and other needs of formations, formations and units in order to maintain their combat readiness in solving assigned tasks. The rear included a number of services: automobile, road, medical, repair, food, clothing, trophy, financial and others. The front-line rear included railway, automobile, road forwarding, road-building units, stationary and field mobile hospitals, field warehouses for the main types of materiel, front-line administrative stations, mobile repair plants and workshops, field bakeries, defense centers for prisoners of war, parts and subdivisions of communications. In total, for example, on the 1st Belorussian Front there were up to 490 rear units and institutions of front-line subordination, including 16 security and service units, 19 artillery institutions, 226 medical institutions, 22 veterinary, 29 quartermasters, fuel supply services - 12; military communications - 58; serving prisoners of war - 10, others - about 20. Each army had up to a hundred of its units and rear services. In total, there were over 1,500 of them in the 1st Belorussian Front.

Based on the nature of the tasks assigned to the rear services, as well as taking into account the peculiarities of the situation in

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fronts, plans were developed to provide troops during the upcoming offensive. Provision was made for the creation of large stocks of materiel, the maximum approach of logistics institutions to the troops. One of the priority tasks of the rear services was the restoration of railways and roads, the increase in throughput, the construction of new roads, and the organization of their uninterrupted service. By January 1945, the railway lines east of the Vistula were restored. In the rear area of the 1st Ukrainian Front, their length reached 1200 km. On the territory of Poland, Polish railway workers participated in the maintenance of steel lines.

By the beginning of 1945, the network of front-line and army military highways in the rear of both fronts reached 2 thousand km. Only the road troops of the 1st Belorussian Front restored and built 562 bridges, strengthened and repaired 626 bridges. A lot of work was carried out on the repair of vehicles. By the beginning of the operation, up to 57.4 thousand vehicles were repaired. On January 1, 1945, the vehicle fleet of both fronts began to number over 131 thousand vehicles and was able to fulfill the tasks assigned to it.

As a result of the hard work of the troops and rear services of the fronts on the restoration of railways and roads, as well as the organization of the uninterrupted operation of transport, the stocks of materiel established by the operation plan were delivered. During the preparation of the operation, 133.1 thousand wagons with troops and materiel were delivered by rail to the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. Over the entire preparatory period, intra-front and intra-army transportation by road amounted to more than 1,068.2 thousand tons. This made it possible by the beginning of the operation, as follows from the data in Table 13, to have 3-4 ammunition loads, 4-5 refills of motor gasoline and diesel fuel, 9-14 refills of aviation gasoline in the fronts.

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Table 13

SECURITY OF THE FRONT TROOPS WITH MATERIALS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE VISLA-ODER OPERATION

Types of material resources

Ammunition Combustible Foodstuffs (in unused kits) (in gas stations) (in daily dachas)

aviation gasoline
diesel
fuel
bakery

ducts
cereals
fats
sugar

gasoline

for
small arms for
artillery

1st Belorussian Front

15-25 | 31-98 b. 140 65 33 66 1st Ukrainian Front

15-2 35-4 | 94 [51 4.6 21.8 20 | 28.8 | 35.5

Recalls a member of the Military Council of the front, Lieutenant General K.V. Krainyukov:

“Having developed comprehensive preparations for the offensive, the Military Council of the front heard in December 1944 the report of the chief of logistics, General N.T. Anisimov about how the ammunition and material resources necessary for the successful implementation of the operation are accumulated. Nikolai Petrovich reported that additional applications had been sent to Moscow. The plan of operation approved by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command also made adjustments to the logistics. The offensive of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, consisting of ten armies, required a large amount of weapons, ammunition, fuel, lubricants, and food. On average, about 500 wagons with various cargoes arrived to us daily. The greatest intensity of transportation was reached in December 1944. In total, during the preparation of the operation, the front received 64,525 wagons. They unloaded on the eastern bank of the Vistula, because due to

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In the vicinity of the enemy, a railway bridge in the Sandomierz region could not be built. All cargo was delivered to the bridgehead by road and horse-drawn vehicles, and was placed mainly in underground warehouses.

Describing the work of the logistics and artillery supply agencies as unusually laborious, General N.P. Anisimov reported to the Military Council that for the 1st Ukrainian Front, which numbered more than a million soldiers, sergeants and officers, 20 daily rations of cereals, 21.8 - bread products, 28.8 - fats, 35.5 - sugar, as well as meat, vegetables and much more.

The list of items with which the troops were supplied was unusually diverse. And not everything was delivered centrally. Enterprising and resourceful business executives often used local resources, organizing the production of uniforms, equipment, as well as various "little things" at local enterprises in Ukraine, in some cases in Poland. This reduced centralized supplies, freeing up vehicles directly for combat support.

The head of the rear briefly informed about how the doctors prepared for the offensive, deploying a network of first-line underground hospitals and medical battalions on the bridgehead. The results of 1944 testified that our medical workers, headed by the head of the military sanitary department of the front, General N.P. Ustinov, two-thirds of the wounded were returned to service.

By January 4, 1945, the Chief of Logistics of the 1st Ukrainian Front drew up an updated plan for organizing the rear and material support of the operation and an order for the rear of the front. Both of these documents were coordinated with the chief of staff of the front. On the same day, the Military Council of the front approved the plan and issued an order for the rear. According to it, the size of materiel to be stockpiled and their separation, approved on December 12, 1944, remained unchanged, but the period for stockpiling instead of December 31, 1944 was extended to January 10, 1945.

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The consumption of material resources for the operation during the month was established: for fuel 6-8 refueling (not more than 0.2 refueling per day per chassis), for ammunition on the first day of the offensive (artillery preparation and combat in depth) - from 2 to 2.5 combat set. In the following days, it was supposed to maintain stocks of ammunition at a level not lower than 1-1.5 ammunition.

A number of features of the work of the rear could be traced on the 10th Belorussian Front. One of them is the solution of such a complex problem as the construction of bridges across the Vistula. Through the joint efforts of the engineering and road bridge parts of the front, 13 bridges were built across this river before the start of the operation, including 6 bridges for a load of 60 tons, 5 bridges for a load of 30 tons, and 2 bridges for a load of 16 tons. The length of each bridge averaged a thousand linear meters, not counting the approaches. Some bridges, as well as the roads leading to them, were important as a means of operational camouflage. So, in the report of the head of the rear of the 8th Guards Army, General P.N. Pakhaznikov we read: "The army had three roads to the bridgehead, two of them passed through the forest, which directly adjoined the Vistula and well masked these roads. The third road was open. The entry of troops to the bridgehead, as well as the supply of materiel, was carried out along the first two roads, and the return empty went along the third road, which created the appearance of pulling troops from the front to the rear. Along with the operation of the existing road network, the road troops of the front were preparing for the construction of additional bridges across the Vistula in the areas of Warsaw and Deblin, where there were no bridgeheads yet and the enemy occupied the entire opposite bank. Trusses, beams on blocks, frame supports and other elements of bridge structures were brought to these objects in advance.

Difficult tasks arose before the military railwaymen. If road builders could, as a temporary measure, build low-water prefabricated collapsible bridges and provide passage for troops and

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military equipment, keeping up with the pace of the troops, almost the same requirements were imposed on railway bridges during the war as in peacetime. True, railway bridges restored or newly built on bypasses were usually called temporary, but their "temporality" was calculated for 10-15 years. To pass 18-20 pairs of railway trains per day, reliable bridges were needed. The degree of destruction of railway bridges, as a rule, was so great that in rare cases it was possible to at least partially use the destroyed farms and supports, but most often they had to be built anew, on a bypass, parallel to the destroyed bridge. This accelerated the commissioning of railway lines, but required additional efforts from railway builders.

In mid-December, the head of the logistics of the 1st Belorussian Front, General N.A. Antipenko was offered

for consideration by the Military Council "Plan for the organization of the rear and material support of the offensive operation." It was based on four fundamental principles.

1. The decisive approach of all the most important institutions of the rear and material reserves to the troops. More than 70 percent of them were located in the zone from 10 to 60 kilometers from the front line. The greatest approximation was planned for front-line hospital bases: in the Garwolin area - for 35,000 beds, in the Pulava area - for 20,000 beds (both points are 15-30 kilometers from the front line), as well as for front-line fuel depots: one - in the Rembertow region, the other in the town of Stavy (both 10-15 kilometers from the front line).

2. Almost complete release of the army rear from their functions in the initial position and the assumption of these functions by the front link. Thanks to this, the army's rear could move without any pause after the advancing troops, providing them in the first stages of the operation. Even divisional medical battalions

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On a halt

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many divisions remained folded and entered the work only by the end of the first day of the battle.

3. Restoration of both railway lines to the Western European gauge and the simultaneous construction of transshipment bases in the Warsaw and Deblin areas. At the same time, the restoration of the railway bridge near Warsaw was envisaged in 18 days and at Deblin - in 20 days.

4. The transition of all highways before the start of the offensive to be serviced by front-line road units. Army road units were released to follow the advancing units.

In addition, the plan contained a detailed development of various measures (deployment of rear units, the procedure for moving them during the offensive, organizing the reception of prisoners of war, guarding and defending the rear).

The medical service was preparing for the upcoming offensive. Of the 123,000 hospital beds available at the front and in the armies, only 38,000 were occupied by the wounded and sick. All the rest were as close as possible to the troops, and non-deployed copper

Qing institutions, ready to follow the troops, were left with 44,000 beds.

According to the accepted version of possible sanitary losses, the medical service of the front and the army paid great attention to the procurement of blood and blood-substituting fluids. Experience has shown that about 15 per cent of all the wounded needed a blood transfusion. The average dose of one transfusion is 330 cubic centimeters. Additionally, the same wounded had to be injected with 500 cubic centimeters of blood-substituting fluid, as well as one dose (10 cubic centimeters) of antishock fluid. Based on these norms, about 2,500 liters of blood and over 6,000 liters of blood-substituting fluids could be used up in the first days of offensive battles. To obtain the required amount of blood, a donor was deployed at the front and in the armies

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ski points and established blood transfusion stations. On January 8, 1945, there were 26,000 donors at the fronts, of which over 9,000 medical workers, 7,600 other military personnel, and about 9,000 civilians. From day to day, the amount of blood harvested at the front increased and was brought up to 130,000 doses. The front had relatively powerful means of medical evacuation - 449 ambulances, 963 ambulances, 15 railway ambulances, 20 military ambulance trains, 52 ambulance aircraft. The 8th Guards and 69th Armies also had one company of dog teams (400 dogs per company) (4-5 pairs of dogs pulled a wagon with two wounded soldiers).

The first task of the rear of the front was to find the right solution to the food problem. Stocks of grain, cereals, potatoes, vegetables remained in the rear, and it was not easy to take them out of there, because the railway bridges across the Bug had not yet been restored. Significant assistance to the front was provided by the government of Poland, represented by the chairman of the Regional Council of the People's Council Bolesław Bierut and the chairman of the Polish Committee of National Liberation Edward-Bolesław Osóbka-Morawski, in August 1944, it adopted a number of important laws on mandatory military supplies for the state. Since they also related to the food of the Soviet troops acting together with the Polish army, the rear services and the political administration of the 1st Belorussian Front participated in explaining to the peasants the laws adopted by the Polish government and in assisting local producers of vehicles, packaging, etc. d.

At the direction of the Military Council, the head of the rear of the front traveled all the voivodships and a significant part of the counties

Right-bank Poland, had official meetings everywhere with representatives of the National Liberation Committee, with local authorities, with representatives of the cooperative Polish public and religious communities. These meetings almost always ended

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full agreement on the conditions, quantity and timing of the supply of food and fodder. Thousands of tons of bread and other products began to arrive at receiving points. The decree obligated the peasants to deliver everything by their own transport, but the front did not refuse motor transport if requested to do so. However, this did not happen so often: the peasants grouped themselves in convoy columns and, under a fluttering red flag, solemnly followed to the surrender points.

A careful study of the organization of the rear during the Vistula-Oder operation, using the example of the 1st Belorussian Front, allows us to note a number of priority tasks solved by the command and control agencies and rear troops.

One of them is the restoration of railways and the construction of bridges across the Vistula. The work was carried out on a wide front, day and night, with the use of quite a variety of means of mechanization, due to which the pace of restoration turned out to be very high. The fact that the roads remained on the Western European track also made the work easier. At the same time, transshipment bases were built at the Warsaw-Zapadnaya station and in the Demblin area. A lot of materials, labor and transport were expended to build at Warsaw-Zapadnaya station more than 30 kilometers of parallel tracks and about a kilometer of high platforms and sheds for temporary storage of goods to be transshipped.

On January 20, 1945, the restoration of the 300-kilometer track from Warsaw to Poznan and the construction of the Warsaw railway bridge were completed. It would be possible to proceed with the transshipment of goods and their delivery to Poznan, since there were hundreds of trains of the allied gauge on the outskirts of Warsaw. The advancing troops by this time were far beyond Poznań, approaching the Oder. The distance between them and the front rail bases reached 500 kilometers. To cross even three to five trains a day and bring them as close as possible to the troops was of inestimable importance at that time. It was not only about the supply of ammunition and

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'(Soviet tanks enter the city of Czestochowa. January 1945

ryuchego; heavy tanks, large-caliber artillery, metal runways, heavy engineering equipment broke away from the troops.

"And then the long-awaited day came," recalls General N.A. Antipenko, when, after the opening of the Warsaw bridge and the entire journey to Poznań, we announced that the main railway line was beginning to operate. But it was precisely on this day that the center received an order to immediately start re-transforming this entire direction to the allied track. It's a joke to say - to rebuild 300 kilometers of a double-track railway! Alter the newly restored Warsaw railway bridge! To remake the huge Warsaw-Zapadnaya junction again and put an end to those superhuman efforts that were expended on the construction and equipment of the transshipment base here! The reader will understand our feelings. But nothing can be done - we had to return the railway troops and demand from them new, literally titanic efforts.

The conversion of the railway to the Allied gauge was carried out in a very short time. January 23, the day the construction of the railway bridge was completed

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near Deblin, traffic was opened along the Western European gauge railway to Skarżysko Kamenna. On January 26, the first train arrived in Źódź, on January 29 in Kutno, on January 30 in Wrocław and on January 31 in Toruń. From January 24 to February 3, 669 wagons of supply cargo were sent along this road, including: 343 wagons of ammunition, 190 wagons of fuel and 136 wagons of other cargo. In a short period of operation, the railway restoration units altered and laid 6515 km of track, restored 1197 turnouts, built 92 small and medium bridges with a length of 4940 linear meters. m

With the opening of railway traffic along the southern communications, the intensity of the work of road transport did not decrease. This is explained by the fact that by that time the troops had traveled about 400 km, leaving behind them most of their reserves on the ground along the highways, as well as east of the Vistula. These stocks had to be transported by road. The resistance of the enemy increased, the consumption of ammunition increased, which required their more intensive delivery. The demand for fuel also increased. The vehicles worked in difficult conditions. The delivery arm reached 600 km at the final stage of the operation. This environment made management and maintenance difficult. On the supply routes, moreover, scattered

enemy groups. The average mileage of one car of automobile companies transporting infantry divisions was 2,000-3,000 km. The average mileage of one car of the army automobile battalion reached 3600 km, and the front-line one - up to 4580 km. The mileage of one car of military units exceeded the scope of the operation by four to five times, and the mileage of one car of army and front-line units - by six to seven times. The number of running cars almost did not decrease during the operation. The running fleet ratio was maintained at 88%. Such results during almost a month of intense operation of machines should be attributed to

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due to the good training of personnel, proper preventive maintenance of vehicles, the introduction of a system of compulsory repair of those vehicles that had a cruising range of less than 5000 km, as well as the fact that a sufficient working capital of engines and other units was accumulated. Each battalion had 20 spare engines.

In total, during the Vistula-Oder operation, motor vehicles of the 1st Ukrainian and 1st Belorussian fronts transported 1.4 million tons of cargo and over 200 thousand people.

The volume of work of the trophy service was unprecedentedly great in the fronts. During the Vistula-Oder operation, 1,119 tanks and self-propelled guns, 4,265 guns of various calibers, 2,401 mortars, 18,327 machine guns, 757 aircraft, and 17,494 vehicles were captured. Basically, these were no longer cars, but scrap metal, but in order to use it, it was necessary to dismantle it, and then, without delay, send each trophy unit to metallurgical plants. To speed up this work, the front commander proposed to allocate one company with vehicles and tractors in each division. But a new problem arose - the lack of qualified personnel for dismantling. Military trophies were not prepared for this work, civilian departments were also slowly involved in this matter. As a result, the main burden of the work fell on the rear services of the front and armies.

Skillfully organized maneuver by medical institutions during the offensive made it possible to drastically shorten the paths of medical evacuation and ensure the treatment of most of the wounded on the spot until their full recovery. Over 50 percent of the wounded were returned to duty after being cured within the frontiers. The Vistula-Oder operation also differed significantly from others in the way the wounded were carried out from the battlefield. A rapidly retreating enemy could not have a repeated fire impact on the wounded, could not disable the porters, therefore, about

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80 percent of all the wounded were taken from the battlefield on stretchers or walked. Thanks to the experience and dedication of the lower levels of the medical service, over 80 per cent of all the wounded were delivered to the regimental medical stations within the first three hours after being wounded.

The medical staff of subunits and units did everything possible to provide timely medical assistance and carry out or take out the wounded from the battlefield. At the same time, many glorious and truly heroic deeds were accomplished. So, when the unit, where Shkarletova Maria Savelyevna served as a sanitary instructor, began to force the Vistula, the sanitary instructor Shkarletova was in the first boat that began the crossing, along with three machine gunners. Under fire in the battle formations of the troops, she fearlessly did her noble work. In the powder smoke, under machine-gun and rifle fire from the enemy, among craters and shell explosions, the glorious woman, risking her life every minute, provided medical assistance, carried to a safe place, and from there evacuated 100 wounded with their weapons to the other side. It was truly a heroic feat. The Soviet government appropriated M.S. Shkar flying high title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

A characteristic feature of the Vistula-Oder operation was the thorough organization of air defense of rear facilities, including warehouses, front-line and army supply bases. To strengthen the security and defense of the rear, a number of special measures were taken. The most important of them were: increasing the combat skills of personnel and the combat readiness of rear units and institutions; compact location of the rear with the establishment of all-round defense, the organization in large settlements of full-time military commandant's offices of front and army subordination and special detachments attached to them to combat sabotage gangs and check all suspicious persons; carrying out the strictest blackout; strict accounting of movement

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local residents; systematic combing of forest areas and careful checking of settlements; breakdown of roads into sections guarded by specially assigned patrols, and others.

Summing up in March 1945 the results of the work of the rear in the Vistula-Oder operation, the head of the rear of the Red Army, for the deputy people's commissar of defense, Army General A.V. Khrulev

noted that the personnel of the rear services - quartermasters, medical workers, motorists, road workers, workers of military communications, fuel supply services and veterinarians - successfully coped with the tasks set to provide the fronts with everything necessary. The personnel of the rear services adequately fulfilled their duty to the Motherland.

Considering that about 7,000 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts took part in the Vistula-Oder operation, the success of the offensive largely depended on the level of combat readiness of tank armies, tank and mechanized corps, individual tank and self-propelled artillery units. In solving this problem, one of the leading places was occupied by the problem of restoring military equipment. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the irretrievable losses in the operation amounted to about 25% of the initial number of combat vehicles, the total losses to be restored were 2%. The average daily failure of tanks and self-propelled guns at the first stage of the operation reached 8.6%, while in the course of pursuit of the enemy it decreased to 6.3%. Combat losses in tank armies were distributed as follows: from enemy artillery fire from 63.1% (1st Guards) to 88.5% (3rd Guards), from mine explosions from 2% (3rd Guards) to 9.5% (4th), from aviation - from 1% (4th) to 10.5% (1st Guards), from faustpatrons - from 6.2% (4th) to 20% (1st Guards).

The tasks of restoring armored vehicles were solved by platoons and companies of maintenance of units and formations, corps repair units (mobile tank repair bases), army repair battalions and companies. Most of the work was carried out on prefabricated

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points of emergency vehicles (SPAM). Archival data on the 4th Panzer Army testify to the distribution of repair capabilities: 648 tanks and self-propelled guns were repaired by brigades, 150 by corps, and 171 by the army. repair and evacuation means of tank armies: from the composition of an army battalion, corps mobile tank repair bases, two full-time army evacuation courts and two SPAM, repair and evacuation groups were created. As a result, in the 1st Guards Tank Army, for example, 227 combat vehicles were repaired, 356 tanks and self-propelled guns were inspected and malfunctions were eliminated. The productivity of work in comparison with the Belorussian operation increased by 2.4 times.

An important role in maintaining the combat readiness of tank formations was played by the properly organized operation of military equipment. Of great importance in

problem solving had a thoughtful organization of technical reconnaissance of the area. Ways were sought (for example, in the 2nd Guards Tank Army) to reduce the time for maintenance. As a result, if in most offensive operations in 1944 the percentage of recovery of combat vehicles was 65-70, then in the Vistula-Oder operation it exceeded 90 of the number of damaged tanks and self-propelled artillery installations.

The most important component of success in the Vistula-Oder operation should be considered the level of skill in the use of forces and means both in breaking through enemy defenses and in operational depth. One of the criteria for the effectiveness of an offensive is to consider the pace of advance achieved by the troops. They are reflected in Table. 14-16. From the data given in them it can be seen that the average rate of advance of tank troops was 30 km / day, the maximum - 70 km / day, combined arms armies - 20-25 km / day and 55 km / day, respectively. Such a high pace for that time

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Soviet troops did not advance in any of the offensive operations of the Great Patriotic War.

The question is natural: due to what it is so successful

Shena had this problem?

Table 14 PATE
OF OFFENSIVE OF THE TROOPS OF THE 1st BYELORUSSIAN FRONT

Distance, pass- | Distance traveled Removal Days mobile general
operations | ny connections | shackles, | with, ioisk
niyami, km by armies, km of prize 14.1 - Up to 12-18 = 15.1 11 11-28 2

16.1 30-70 15-20 10-50 17.1
15-55 25-35 15-40
18.1 35-45 20-30 10-30
19.1 45-70 20-35 35-70 | 20.1
20-45 20-40 35-70

21.1 45-50 25-35 55-90 22.1
40-60 25-40 25-95 23.1 10-45
25-45 35-60 24.1 0-50 25-40
0-40
25.1 0-40 20-35 20-35
26.1 12-30 10-40 15-55 27.1
5-10 15-40 5-30

28.1 25 10-35 12 29.1
15-25 5-15 0-10
30.1 30 10-30 -8
31.1 25-50 10-55 0-20 1.2
0-40 15-20 0-35
2:2. 20 10—30 0

3.2 = 10-20 0

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Table 15

THE RATE OF ADVANCE OF THE TROOPS OF THE 1st UKRAINIAN
FRONT IN THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 12 TO 18, 1945 (IN KILOMETERS)

Operation days m

Army Medium

pace

1 2 3 4 — 6 7

13th A 15 18 10 12 25 40 30 21

52nd A 20 20 25 25 E: 35 30 27 5th Guards

A. 16 20 25 25 20 40 10 22 Medium VI 17 19 20

21 21 38

23 24 3rd Guards A | 14 | 25 | 35 | 40

35 | 40 | 20 30 4th TA 15 25 15 15 35 40 15 23

Medium |145 [25 | 25 |275 | 35 | 40 | 18 26

pace

Undoubtedly, the general superiority in forces and means of the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts over the enemy, the dominance of Soviet aviation in the air, and the achieved fire superiority of the advancing troops had an effect. There were, however, other factors contributing to the achievement of high rates of advance in conditions when the enemy had defensive lines prepared in terms of engineering in the operational depth, fortified zones in the border areas and a number of fortress cities.

One of them is a sharp increase in the density of tanks in direct support of infantry compared to previous operations, as evidenced by the data in Table 1. 17. Due to this, the enemy's defense, both in the tactical zone and in the operational depth, broke through at a faster pace. It should be emphasized that the attacks of tanks and infantry, as a rule, are accompanied

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was given by self-propelled artillery mounts. To support the tanks in battle, escort guns began to be allocated. Engineer units were attached to tank units. Artillery commanders were assigned to radium tanks to correct the fire that artillery fired from closed firing positions against enemy anti-tank weapons.

Table 17

DENSITY OF TANKS DIRECTLY SUPPORTING INFANTRY
DURING THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

about | 'Operation, Army

Counteroffensive under Mo- 8th Guards. SD 24 6.6 squay,
December 1941

5th TA
21-YA 293rd Rifle
Division 27 8 Counteroffensive near Kur- 8th Guards. sc 4 16

skom, July 1943. 11th A
Liberation
of Belarus, 5th Guards. sk 4 June 18, 1944 39th A Iasi-
Kishinev
operation,
104th sk ,5 and August 1944 27th A Vistula-Oder operation,
29th Guards. sc 35
January
23, 1945 8th Guards. A

94th Guards. SD 2.5 25
5th bpm A

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Table 18

INTRODUCING FRONT AND ARMY
MOBILE GROUPS IN THE BREAKTHROUGH (BATTLE)

1.Mobile groups of fronts

Numbers of tank
armies
Depth of entry from the front
edge, km Time of
entry (day of operation)
Operational
formation Total
offensive
depth, km Maximum pace,
km

Maximum separation of
TA from combined arms
formations, km

input bar width,
km
> | Number of routes

1st Guards 10 [14—15 2nd [One echelon | 600 75

'One echelon

two echelons

4th 6 | 4 | 6—7 1st [One echelon 400 | 60 | 60

It is legitimate to note the skillful use of tank armies, tank and mechanized corps, both to complete the breakthrough of the main defense of the enemy's line, and in his pursuit. It was they, according to the chief of staff of the 2nd tank army, General A.I. Radzievsky, "were the main force of the fronts in achieving high rates. In fact, they led all the other troops."

Indeed, as the data in Table 18, the control depth of the mobile groups of fronts reached 600-700 km, the maximum rate was 75-85 km per day, and the separation from combined arms formations was 60-90 km. Mobile army groups also achieved high maximum rates of advance (about 70-75 km per day).

A characteristic feature of the actions of tank and mechanized troops in the Vistula-Oder operation was the bypassing of fortified cities and large centers of resistance of the enemy,

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precise defensive lines. A special role was assigned to the advanced detachments, whose task was to, without getting involved in protracted battles, they went out on the way out of the main enemy forces, seized crossings, fords, bridgeheads on rivers, road junctions, airfields, under favorable conditions, overcame fortified areas in operational depth. Thus, the advanced detachments of the 69th Army, consisting of the 20th and 65th tank brigades, approaching the fortified point Radom on January 15, bypassed it from the north and south, rushing in the directions of Glogow, Mniszek.

The swiftness of the pursuit of the enemy was in direct proportion to his continuity. For this purpose, periodic replacement of forward detachments operating in a certain direction was practiced. In the 7th Guards Tank Corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, such a replacement was carried out five times between January 14 and 24. The continuity of the actions of the tank (mechanized) brigade as part of the forward detachment was 2-3 days. In the 1st Mechanized Corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army, from January 18 to January 30, forward detachments changed six times every 1-4 days.

The greatest success of the pursuit was achieved with skillful use for its conduct at night.

wiyah. The darkness of the night ensured the secrecy and surprise of the actions of tank and mechanized formations, and made it possible to capture important lines and objects on the move. However, difficult night conditions demanded from the commanders great skill in organizing and directing the battle, and from the troops - high skill in delivering sudden and daring strikes under the cover of darkness. The Great Patriotic War is rich in the experience of such combat operations of armored forces. Thus, the advanced detachments of the corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, under the cover of night darkness, overcame the second line of enemy defense. By the morning of January 13, they reached the Nida River, crossed it on the move, captured bridgeheads in

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the area of Sobkow and Motkovotse and began preparing crossings for the main forces of the army in this area.

The forward detachment of the 9th Guards Tank Corps of the 2nd Guards Tank Army is the 47th Guards Tank Brigade with reinforcements under the command of Colonel N.V. Kopylov - captured the city of Gruets with a sudden night strike and by 24.00 on January 16 started a battle for Sokhachev, cutting off the enemy's retreat from Warsaw to the west. Operating mainly at night, the brigade covered up to 90 km in a day with a fight. On the night of January 21, the 10th Guards Tank Corps of the 4th Guards Tank Army reached the approaches to the town of Shilberg. Breaking into the city and destroying the garni of enemy zones, he captured an important road junction on the way to the Oder.

In solving the tasks of pursuing the enemy, especially with the main forces of the tank armies, the well-organized interaction of ground forces with aviation, the main tasks of which at this stage of the operation were to conduct aerial reconnaissance, support the offensive, fight against enemy reserves, strike at outgoing

Residents of the liberated Krakow welcome the troops of the Red Army. February 1945

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enemy troops and suitable reserves, prohibiting them from occupying rear lines, covering tank (mechanized) formations from enemy air strikes. As a rule, the actions of tank armies were supported by one attack and one fighter aviation corps, coming under the operational subordination of the army commanders. Reliable aviation support allowed the main forces of associations and

formations roll up into marching order, advancing at a high pace. This was also facilitated by the fact that the forward detachments were reinforced by artillery.

In the process of rapid pursuit, the advancing units, in order not to lose momentum, did not pay attention to the fact that in their rear, especially in wooded areas, quite large enemy groups sometimes remained unliquidated, numbering up to 2000-3000 people in their composition. They carried out acts of sabotage in the rear, attacked the headquarters, the rear, and separately moving vehicles. In the armies, special detachments were allocated to eliminate such groups. In particular, for this purpose, by order of the commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, the troops of the fortified regions were used.

The 33rd and, to some extent, the 69th armies had to wage a particularly stubborn struggle against the non-friendly groupings that remained in the rear. To the rear of these armies, quite significant enemy groups retreated from the blows of the right-flank formations of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which, using the rugged and wooded nature of the terrain in the offensive zone of the 33rd Army, tried to break through in a northwestern direction through the rear of the army. To eliminate such groups, the army commander was forced to detach the 38th rifle corps.

Indicators of the average daily rate of advance increased due to the skillful use of forces and means in the conduct of oncoming battles. An example of this is the defeat of the 24th tank corps of the enemy

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troops of the 4th Panzer Army in cooperation with part of the forces of other formations in the Kielce region. In order to ensure the planned withdrawal of its troops, the fascist German command sought at all costs to keep the communications that ran north of Kielce. To this end, on January 13, 1945, it undertook a counterattack by the forces of the 24th Panzer Corps (16th and 17th Panzer, 20th Motorized Divisions, a total of about 360 tanks), which was in the reserve of Army Group A, against advancing on the way withdrawal of the Kielce Chelm group to the troops of the 4th Panzer Army in order to defeat them and disrupt the further offensive of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

The oncoming battle began with the fighting of the forward detachments of the corps of the first echelon of the 4th Tank Army, which, with their bold and decisive actions, disrupted the organized exit of the divisions of the 24th Tank Corps to the planned deployment lines. The enemy was forced to bring them into battle

not simultaneously, but sequentially.

Covered by actively operating forward brigades from the front, the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army - the 10th Guards. tank and 6th Guards. mechanized corps - after performing the maneuver, they first delivered flank attacks on the move against the enemy's 17th Panzer Division, which had pulled ahead, and by the end of January 13, in cooperation with the 6th Guards. tank corps of the 3rd Guards. tank army and with the support of the 2nd Guards. assault and 2nd fighter aviation corps of the 2nd air army defeated it, and then, regrouping, on January 14 they hit the right flank of its 16th tank division. By 3 p.m. on January 15, the remnants of the main forces of the enemy's 24th Panzer Corps were surrounded by the joint efforts of the 4th Panzer and 13th Armies, cut into pieces and destroyed. The enemy lost up to 180 tanks and assault guns, formations of the 4th Panzer Army - about 130 tanks and self-propelled artillery mounts. The former fascist general K. Tip pelskirch, assessing the events of those days, wrote: "The blow was

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so strong that it overturned not only the divisions of the first echelon, but also mobile reserves ... The front of the 4th Panzer Army was torn to pieces.

Combined-arms armies pursued the enemy in lanes up to 35 km at a rate of 30 km per day. Their forward detachments, which played an important role in this task, consisted, as a rule, of a tank brigade, a rifle regiment in motor vehicles and other means of reinforcement. Advancing behind the tank armies and individual tank corps, the advanced detachments moved up to 50-60 km from the main forces.

The main forces of the combined arms armies and mobile groups pursued in columns and deployed for combat only as needed, namely, to repulse counterattacks, capture important enemy strongholds and major road junctions. The buildup of efforts during pursuit was carried out by bringing second echelons into battle, usually to secure the flanks and defeat stubbornly resisting enemy groupings.

One of the features of the pursuit of the enemy in the Vistula-Oder operation is the widely used by the troops of both fronts, especially the 1st Belorussian, bypassing resistance centers and blocking large enemy groupings in fortress cities with their subsequent destruction. In a number of cases, the troops of both fronts surrounded and destroyed fairly large enemy groupings. So it was in the districts of Opoczno (about 17 thousand), Kielce (up to 8 thousand), Sokhachev

(3-5 thousand), in the forests southeast of Radomsko (about 6 thousand), south of Leshno (up to 10 thousand), east of Ostrovets (about 7 thousand). The Warsaw and Katowice enemy groupings were in a semi-encirclement. The garrisons, surrounded by Soviet troops, numbered more than 70 thousand soldiers and officers.

Aviation played an important role in the pursuit. Sometimes it was the only means of effectively influencing the enemy, creating a favorable

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Road bridge near Warsaw

conditions for the unstoppable advance of troops. The main forces of the assault and fighter air divisions were transferred to the operational subordination of tank armies and tank and mechanized corps, which contributed to their close interaction.

The achievement of high rates was largely facilitated by maneuvers and regroupings carried out by decision of the commanders of the fronts.

Thus, the 47th Army, by entering the Blonie area, carried out operational coverage of the Warsaw grouping against the nickname. The 61st Army, advancing in a northwesterly direction, carried out a wide maneuver to curtail the enemy's defense front along the western bank of the Vistula.

An example of a maneuver with the aim of reaching the rear of a large enemy grouping is the turn of the 3rd Guards Army after breaking through the enemy defenses to the north. As a result of this maneuver, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian and 1st Belorussian fronts were united behind enemy lines and the Ostrovetsko-Opatuvskaya group of Germans was defeated.

Ensuring the development of success on the left flank of the main strike force, Marshal I.S. Konev the third

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On the day of the operation, during the period of struggle with the operational reserves of the Germans, he brought the army into battle from behind the right flank of the 60th Army. As a result of the rapid development of the operation and a well-conceived maneuver, a threat was created here to the communications of the German 17th Army, which forced the enemy to a hasty retreat. At the same time, the rapid exit of the 59th Army to Krakow did not allow the Germans to concentrate the necessary forces to protect this important center, and it fell on the second day of the struggle.

for him.

Evidence of the high level of military art was the regrouping of the 21st Army from the Breslau direction to the Upper Silesian during the operation. A characteristic feature of this maneuver was expressed not only in the complexity of its implementation, but mainly in the timely and correct assessment of the rapidly changing situation and in the decision to redirect troops to carry out a new operational mission. An example of a maneuver is also the turn of the 3rd Guards Tank Army from the Breslav direction to the south in order to use it for a strike along the eastern bank of the river. Oder behind enemy lines. With this maneuver, two major tasks were simultaneously solved - the access of the 5th Guards and 21st Armies to the Oder and the access of the 3rd Guards Tank Army to the communications of the entire Silesian German grouping were ensured.

Major regroupings were carried out at the final stage of the Vistula-Oder operation, when a gap of more than 200 km formed between the main forces of the 1st Belorussian and the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian Fronts, poorly covered by the troops of the 1st Army of the Polish Army and one cavalry corps. Meanwhile, the Nazi command, having assessed the real situation, began to concentrate an army grouping in Eastern Pomerania, consisting of several corps under the command of Himmler, with the aim of delivering a blow to the flank and rear of the main grouping of troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. Later this grouping intensified. On January 26, the Army Group "Vistula" was created.

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as part of the 2nd, 9th and 11th armies. Under these conditions, the Supreme High Command. and the command of the front, seeing the growing danger of a counterattack, are taking vigorous measures to castling the necessary forces and means to the north. In total, from January 24 to February 1, 1945, four combined arms armies were turned north and regrouped (1st Polish, 47th, 61st, 3rd shock), 2nd Guards. tank army and the 2nd Guards. cavalry corps.

The rearrangement under consideration had a number of features.

Firstly, not all armies performing the task of securing the flank of the front were regrouping in the full sense of the word. A number of them (1st Army of the Polish Army, 47th and 61st armies) only deployed the main forces with a front to the north, while the rest of the formations regrouped from the left flank of their armies to the right or were withdrawn to the army reserve. 2nd Guards Since January 24, the cavalry corps received the task of changing the direction of the offensive 30-35 ° to the north, and

one division even went on the defensive.

Secondly, the regrouping was carried out not simultaneously, but sequentially in time, depending on changes in the situation and the arrival of new intelligence data. Thus, the 1st Army of the Polish Army received the task of securing the right wing of the front as early as 18 January. 47th, 61st armies and 2nd guards. cavalry corps began a turnaround and a partial regrouping of forces on January 24-25, 2nd Guards. the tank army regrouped all forces from 26 to 28 January. From January 29 to January 31, the 3rd shock army advanced to Pomerania - the second echelon of the front.

Thirdly, the regrouping was carried out over a relatively short distance. The longest march was made by the troops of the 2nd Guards. tank army, but this also concerned only one tank corps, which on January 29 overcame the Pomeranian fortified area and was replaced by rifle divisions in order to withdraw it to the rear and for further operations as part of the army

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missions heading north. The movement of the rest of the forces was carried out in parts. In order for the enemy on the Oder (Oder) to be convinced that the former formations were operating in front of him, it was decided to temporarily leave part of the forces with radio stations in contact with the enemy, which continued to work intensively.

In a number of cases, high offensive rates were achieved through the use of unusual, little-known or completely unknown to the enemy methods of solving combat missions. On the 1st Belorussian Front, the so-called special echelons of the 5th shock and 8th guards armies, which were not previously used, achieved the greatest success. As a result of a swift attack, carried out after a 25-minute fire raid along the entire enemy's main line of defense and supported by a single barrage of fire, they captured the first and then the second trenches of the first defense position, which contributed to the sudden transition of the main forces to a general offensive. In the front line, enemy disinformation was also carried out on January 23, when, by order of Marshal G.K. Zhukov was handed over by the commanders of the 9th and 12th Guards Tank Corps to the commander of the 2nd Guards Tank Army, General S.I. Bogdanov, with the help of a simplified code, false radio messages: "I received the task for Danzig, there is enough fuel."

These radiograms were intended to mislead the enemy about the further actions of the right wing of the front and to hide the lack of fuel in the tank army. Actions of the 9th Guards Tank Corps in

in the direction of Bydgoszcz and the interception of the radiogram were interpreted by the command of the German 2nd Army as the beginning of an offensive by troops in a new direction. Therefore, the enemy, covering the rear of his Pomeranian grouping, deployed the approaching three divisions to cover the Danzig direction, leaving the Charnikau (Czarnkow) area practically uncovered. The advance of the troops of the front to the Oder (Odra) was unexpected for

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the enemy, whose main forces were in the Schneidemühl area. As a result, on January 28, the 2nd Guards Tank Army, having overcome the Pomeranian fortified area, reached the Oder (Odra).

In order to achieve high rates, all possible measures were taken to force the rivers as quickly as possible. In this regard, the practice of forcing the Oder (Odra) by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front in winter and spring conditions, when the river had an ice cover in some places and a free water surface, deserves attention. In view of the fact that the main forces of the 4th Panzer, 52nd, and 5th Guards Armies reached the river at different times, the front command concentrated its main efforts on ensuring that it was crossed first by the troops of the 5th Guards. army, then the 52nd and, at the end, the 4th tank and 13th armies. Ice crossings were established in all armies, and amphibious and ferry crossings were established in areas free of ice. The pontoon units of the front reserve built floating or combined bridges and in parallel built low-water ones, after which the floating bridges were removed and transferred to other areas.

So, in the band of the 5th Guards. Army on January 24, a 16-ton floating bridge and a 12-ton combined bridge were built and a 60-ton low-water bridge was built. In the zone of the 52nd Army, floating bridges were not built, but ice crossings were in operation, and on January 27, 2 low-water bridges for loads of 30 and 60 tons were put into operation. In the zone of operations of the 13th and 4th tank armies, 2 floating bridges (16 and 30 tons) were built on January 28, and on February 1, 2 low-water bridges (30 and 60 tons) were put into operation. Such a consistent creation by the forces of the front engineering units of the main bridge crossings contributed to the capture and consolidation of 9 bridgeheads on the Oder, which ensured the further offensive of the front.

In some cases, forcing was carried out on ice. For the crossing of artillery and vehicles, sappers reinforced the ice with wooden decks. So I decided for the dacha when crossing the Nida River on January 13, the advanced

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detachment of the 6th Guards Tank Corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army under the command of Colonel I.I. Yakubovsky (in the postwar years Marshal of the Soviet Union). The troops of the 1st Guards Tank Army successfully crossed the Pilica River on the ice, more precisely, the forward detachments of the 11th Guards Tank and 8th Guards Mechanized Corps, which, having seized the bridgeheads, ensured the guidance of one bridge on the ice with a carrying capacity of 60 tons and another from a semi-ponto new (they were placed on ice) with a carrying capacity of 50 tons! Quite often, the successful forcing of water barriers was facilitated by the infliction of effective fire damage on the enemy. An example of this is the actions of the 44th Guards Rifle Division to develop an offensive during the operation in January 1945. Having received information about the preparation of defense by the enemy on the western bank of the Sonya River, the division commander organized a thorough reconnaissance and, based on data on the weak and strong points of the enemy defense, struck with two regiments of the first echelon (128th and 133rd Guards Rifle Regiments). Their actions were supported by most of the artillery. And up to 50 percent. her you-

The French, British and Americans liberated by the Red Army are returning home

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divided for direct fire. The powerful fire impact on the enemy allowed the division to attack him on the move with two regiments of the first echelon, without waiting for the deployment of the rest of the forces. The enemy was quickly defeated, and the 128th Guards Rifle Regiment, using massive artillery fire, crossed the Wkra River and captured a bridgehead south of Sobieski.

It should be emphasized that the crossing of the Oder (Odra) River was carried out by the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front in a strip of more than 100 km, of the 1st Ukrainian Front in a strip of 200 km, which made it difficult for the enemy to carry out any significant regrouping of troops, while At the same time, the time facilitated maneuver by the forces and means of the advancing fronts.

The art of mastering large cities, such as Warsaw, Krakow, Lodz, Katowice, Oppeln, received further development. A characteristic feature of the defense of the fascist German troops in operations was that the cities were organically included in the general system of fortifications, being in it major strongholds of operational or even strategic importance. During the defense of cities, the goal was to pin down as many forces of the advancing enemy as possible, to disunite his efforts, to make it difficult to maneuver with reserves,

win as much time as possible to organize defense at a new frontier. Another feature was that the population of the cities actively supported the troops defending them, as a result of which the battles went on for a long time and with exceptional persistence (Poznan, Schneidemühl). The art of capturing large cities was based on operational maneuver. Three main methods are traced. The first is the encirclement of the city with its simultaneous assault (Lodz). The second is to bypass the city from both flanks, followed by its isolation and assault (Poznan). The third way is to bypass the city from one flank, as a result of which the enemy, under the threat of encirclement, leaves the city and retreats (Warsaw).

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An analysis of the forms of operational maneuver in the struggle for large cities showed that their most characteristic feature was the encirclement, which in the overwhelming majority of cases preceded the direct struggle in the city itself. Encirclement was initially carried out by mobile troops, and a solid front was created with the approach of combined arms formations. The blockade and storming of the city was carried out by combined arms armies in cooperation with aviation. In the actions of troops during the assault on cities, in comparison with an offensive under normal conditions, there were many tactical features related to the limited visibility, constraint in maneuver along the front, the complexity of command and control of troops, and other factors. Artillery was used decentralized. Howitzer artillery, mortars, large-caliber guns, tanks and self-propelled guns acquired particular importance. They were part of the assault groups and detachments, which formed the basis of the battle formation of combined arms formations.

In a number of cases, the capture of cities was facilitated by the daring night actions of the advancing troops, an example of which was the liberation of the city of Inowroclaw on January 21 by the 34th motorized rifle brigade of the 12th Guards Tank Corps under the command of Colonel N.P. Ohman. The outcome of the battle for the city, in essence, was decided thanks to the competent initiative actions of the battalion, which was commanded by Captain V.N. Krott (he turned 24 that day). The battalion secretly approached the outskirts of the city, swiftly attacked the enemy, causing panic in the central square. It took less than an hour to clear the city of the enemy. The soldiers of the 22nd motorized rifle brigade (commanded by Colonel Kh.S. Bogdanov) acted similarly in cooperation with the 543rd rifle regiment of the 120th rifle division on the night of January 23, when capturing the city of Oppeln. Having captured a warehouse with faustpatrons, motorized riflemen used them against the Nazis, thereby sowing panic among the garrison personnel.

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In the course of the Vistula-Oder operation, various methods were sought to increase the activity of aviation operations. The fact is that a sudden thaw caused a strong mudslide. Field airfields are out of order. Aviation, according to the conditions of basing, lagged behind the ground forces. At the same time, favorable conditions were created for enemy aviation: a good meteorological situation in their base areas and the availability of prepared airfields with artificial cover. The fascist German aviation took advantage of this and during the last ten days of January in the offensive zone of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front made about 14,000 sorties, and the 16th Air Army - only 624. The Soviet command took urgent measures. They were used to base fighters of the highway. The first test of such an unusual airfield was conducted by the commander of the 9th Guards Fighter Aviation Division, three times Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel A.I. Pokryshkin.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

POKRYSHKIN Alexander Ivanovich (b. in 1913), air marshal (1972), three times Hero of the Soviet Union (twice in 1943 and 1944). Member of the CPSU since 1942. In the Red Army in 1932. He graduated from the aviation school of aircraft technicians (1933), the aviation school of pilots (1939), the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze (1948), Military Academy of the General Staff (1957). In June 1941 - senior lieutenant.

During the war, deputy commander and squadron commander, assistant commander and commander of the 16th Guards Fighter Aviation Regiment, from May 1944 commander of the 9th Guards Fighter Aviation Division. Participated in defensive battles on the Southern Front, in the battle for the Caucasus, in air battles in the Kuban, in the battle for the Dnieper, in air battles over the Prut, Jassy, in the Lvov-Sandomierz, Vistula-Oder and Berlin operations. An innovator in the development of air combat tactics. He made over 600 sorties, personally shot down 59 enemy planes. He was the first in the country to be awarded 3 Gold Star medals.

After the war in the Air Defense Forces. In 1968-1971. Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Air Defense Forces of the country. Since 1972, Chairman of the Central Committee of DOSAAF. Since 1981 in the Group of Inspectors General of the USSR Ministry of Defense. Awarded 6 Orders of Lenin, Order

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'October Revolution, 4 orders of the Red Banner, 2 orders

Suvorov 2nd degree, 2 orders of the Red Star, the Order "For Service to the Motherland in the Armed Forces of the USSR" 3rd degree. Bronze bust - vg. Novosibirsk.

Soon, the entire air division was based on the highway. The 22nd Guards Fighter Aviation Division (commander Lieutenant Colonel L.I. Goreglyad) did the same. In addition, each combined arms army built one airfield in its lane, on which special metal plates were laid. Thus, the problem of basing aviation during the operation was solved. With bold and decisive actions, the Soviet fighters broke the resistance of the enemy in the air. Having redeployed four times to carry out combat missions during the period of pursuit from January 18 to February 3, the 16th and 2nd air armies made more than 42,000 sorties. The 3rd, 6th, and 13th Fighter Aviation Corps of the RVGK, headed by Generals E.Ya. Savitsky, I.M. Dzusov and B.A. Sidnev. The formations led by them reliably covered the ground troops from air strikes and boldly stormed the enemy on the ground. The 18th Air Army of Long-Range Aviation, in the interests of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian and 1st Belorussian fronts, disrupted the enemy's railway transportation by night and prevented the concentration of his reserves. From January 17 to January 26, she made more than 600 battles

outbound sorties.

The success of the Soviet troops in the Vistula-Oder operation was directly influenced by the degree of optimal command and control of troops, a process associated with the implementation of a set of measures by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, commanders (commanders), headquarters and other command and control bodies to maintain a high level of combat capability of troops and guide them in dealing with combat missions. tasks. Efficiency, firmness, flexibility, continuity and secrecy are considered to be the most important requirements for management.

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In the Vistula-Oder operation, the efficiency of control was achieved by minimal time spent on the implementation of certain functions to lead subordinates (when they make clarification of decisions, bring combat missions, organize their implementation). The firmness of management was expressed in the ability of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, commanders (commanders) to persistently implement the decision made, to keep in their hands the leadership of subordinates in any conditions. The flexibility of command and control consisted in the ability to make timely changes to the offensive plan, based on the prevailing situation. The continuity of control was ensured by the stability and survivability of the control system, its ability to provide constant

the passage of operational-tactical information in all command and staff instances in order to exert the necessary influence on the course of hostilities. The secrecy of control was expressed in keeping secret from the enemy all measures, primarily decisions made, in the preparation of an operation and in the course of combat operations.

One of the most important conditions for effective command and control of troops was the expedient organization of command and control posts and communication systems. In the operational units, the separation of control points was characteristic, their approach to the troops conducting combat operations, the separation in fronts and armies (0 especially in tank ones) from the command posts of operational groups, the integrated use of communications (wire, radio, mobile) . In tactical instances, great attention was paid to the organization of observation (command and observation) posts at such a distance that they could see the actions of troops in the direction of the main attack.

Troops were commanded at the start of hostilities from observation posts, and in operational depth from command posts. Their movement was carried out according to a predetermined scheme, with the permission of a superior chief, and only to the area prepared

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ny in relation to communication. The command posts of the fronts changed their location every 5-6 days to a depth of 80-100 km, of the combined arms armies - after 3-4 days to a depth of 50-60 km. Observation posts of corps commanders were chosen at a distance of 1-1.5 km from the forward edge, command posts - at a distance of up to 5 km. Observation posts of division commanders were located at a distance of 0.5-1 km, command posts - from 2 to 4 km. The regimental commanders had their observation posts no further than 0.5 km from the front line, and the command post no further than 1-2 km. Observation posts of artillery commanders were located both during the breakthrough period and during the offensive, together with the combined arms commanders. During the organization of communications, the means of communication were distributed on the basis of three positions: an operating network, a roll-up network, and a reserve. Mutual information was clearly set during the operation. It was given from the corps every 6 hours, from the division - every 4 hours and from the headquarters of the regiment - every 2 hours.

The commander of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front issued an order defining the procedure for placing control points and the work of commanders in command of the troops. "Establish an order in which the commanders," it was noted in it, "lead the battle with the NP, from where they see the battlefield, their troops and the enemy grouping ... The commander next to him must have operational

group of headquarters, chief of artillery, chief of communications, intelligence officer, a group of officers or sergeants as communications delegates, direct communication with the subordinate commanders is obligatory. Commanders ... have their own NPs in the main direction of the army. By the end of the day, the commander returns to the headquarters (at the command post), sums up the results of the battle, gives orders for the next day and reports the action plan to me.

Particular attention during the operation was paid to personal communication between commanders (commanders), most often by going to the command posts of subordinates, less often by calling subordinates to their own command post. The most characteristic departure to subordinates was for the command

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From left to right: A.P. Verkholetov, A.P. Dmitriev, D.A. Dragunsky, S.M. Borzunov

commanders of tank and mechanized corps.

Political work among the troops participating in the Vistula-Oder operation was of a purposeful nature to create a high offensive impulse among the personnel, confidence in a close and final victory over the enemy. She fully achieved her goal, being one of the components of success in the operation.

Emphasizing the successful completion of the Vistula-Oder operation, its high efficiency, it would be wrong not to note some miscalculations and mistakes made both in its preparation and in the course of combat operations.

Perhaps the most significant miscalculation in the activities of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command is, perhaps, its decision, fully supported by the commanders of the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts (in fact, proposed by them to the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command), to conduct the final campaign of 1945, providing carrying out an offensive operation without any pause until the capture of the capital of Germany, Berlin

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nom. The source of this miscalculation was the underestimation of the capabilities of the enemy and the overestimation of the capabilities of the Red Army, which required in the first days of February 1945 to make fundamental adjustments to the plan for further actions of the fronts.

One of the shortcomings is the low effectiveness of the operational camouflage carried out by the fronts in order to mislead the enemy and prevent the suddenness of the transition of troops to the offensive. Thus, the demonstration of the concentration of the tank army on the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front, as evidenced by the captured documents, did not attract much attention of the enemy leadership. The enemy, not without reason, expected the main blow of the Soviet troops from the bridgehead, where he concentrated his main efforts. True, having received information from undercover intelligence about the concentration of tanks and other military equipment on the left wing of the front, the fascist command did not dare to withdraw any forces from this direction and regroup them to the main direction before the start of the operation.

In this regard, the report of the front headquarters notes that the conduct of camouflage measures was negatively affected to one degree or another by the unpreparedness and indiscipline of some commanders and units participating in their implementation, the paucity of qualified camouflage units, an acute shortage of army service equipment: camouflage, lack of models of tanks, motor vehicles and tools of industrial production. Models of equipment were made of raw material, had a lot of weight and were so bulky that maneuvering them was difficult, and their repeated use was excluded. To imitate the "survivability" of false areas of concentration and the plausibility of the accumulation of military equipment, there were not enough sound installations. Particularly low camouflage discipline was shown by the rear units and institutions.

A certain miscalculation was made on the 1st Ukrainian Front when the main forces of tank armies were brought into battle. At 14 o'clock Marshal I.S. Konev gave the order to enter

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into the battle of the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies and separate tank corps. The advanced tank brigades, together with the rifle formations, basically completed the breakthrough of the enemy's first line of defense on the first day, but the entry of the main forces of the tank armies was delayed until the morning of January 13th. Taking advantage of the delay, the enemy, relying on the second line of defense, launched a counterattack with the 24th Panzer Corps. This led to protracted fighting that lasted all day on 13 January. The tactical defense zone was broken through only on the second day. The tank armies completed the task of the first day of the offensive (to cross the Nida River on the move) only on the third day. There were several reasons for the belated entry into operational viewing. This is the poorly organized interaction of tank formations with infantry, and not always effective fire impact on the enemy, and unsatisfactory engineering support for the entry. As a result, tank armies, before entering the rear defense,

The frontier was advancing jointly with the combined arms, breaking ahead only in certain areas.

Similar miscalculations were made on the 1st Belorussian Front. As noted by the chief of staff of artillery G.S. Nadysev, "this was our first experience of providing artillery support" with the introduction of two tank armies into the gap at the same time, and it must be admitted that we made a number of significant mistakes.

The introduction of tank armies into battle was the most important operational measure of the front, and the commander of the artillery of the front and his staff somewhat abstained from this matter, confining themselves to mere instructions and drawing up a basic plan of fire. Nor was a temporary command post for the commander of the front artillery headed by his deputy, with a small task force and the necessary means of command, established.

The 2nd Guards Tank Army was introduced in a strip 14 kilometers wide in a two-echelon operational formation. Under these conditions, artillery

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the sintering of its entry was extremely insufficient, that is, a density of about 40 guns and mortars per kilometer of the front. The security of the 1st Guards Tank Army turned out to be even worse, the operational formation of which was carried out in one echelon, and it was introduced on a 17-kilometer front. Fortunately, the entry conditions were favorable, and, despite our mistakes, the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies successfully entered the gap and advanced 25 kilometers on the first day.

The mistake of the commander of the 4th Ukrainian Front, General of the Army I.E. Petrov considers Marshal K.S. Moskalenko (at that time the commander of the 38th Army), his decision to bring the armies into battle not on January 12 (as Moskalenko suggested), but on January 15. "No matter how swift our offensive was," writes K.S. Moskalenko, - we still could not regain the time that we had lost by starting the operation only on January 15th. As a result, as I expected, we were only about half way to Krakow, and the troops of the left flank of the 59th and right flank of the 60th armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front, who had been advancing since January 12, had already started fighting for this city. But it was by no means a matter of which of our armies would get the honor of liberating Krakow. It's about something else.

The enemy troops, who continued to defend in front of the left flank of the 60th Army and were outflanked on both flanks by the offensive of units of the latter, as well as ours

armies, under the threat of encirclement, began to retreat to the west. It was impossible to close the ring around them precisely because the offensive of the 60th and 38th armies did not begin simultaneously, with a gap of three days, as a result of which the depth of penetration into the enemy defenses turned out to be unequal. The enemy grouping was able to get out of the bag, and it retreated into the zone of our army. Already on January 17, we found in front of our right flank units of the 78th and 544th Infantry Divisions, which were withdrawing from the zone of the 60th Army. However, under the influence of our troops, they just as hastily retreated.

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Party organizer I. Prach (left) and gunner S. Allashev

Our advance, especially on the left flank, was slowed down to no small extent by the fact that the 1st Guards Army, on the orders of the front commander, began the offensive three days later than us. In general, I still do not see a clear sense in determining the timing of strikes by the troops of the 4th Ukrainian Front: the 18th Army - on January 12, the 38th Army - on the 15th, the 1st Guards - on the 18th. The direction of the front's main attack also turned out to be somewhat uncertain, since our 38th and 1st Guards Armies were advancing along divergent directions. As a result, throughout the first days of the operation, we had to devote a lot of forces, including a significant part of the mobile group, to secure the left flank of the army in the area of Nowy Sącz. But they could contribute to an even more rapid advance if they advanced in the main direction. Subsequently, this gap was filled by the advance of the reserves of the front and part of the forces of the 1st Guards Army to the area of its junction with us. But it was not possible to make up for lost time."

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They were unsuccessful, according to Marshal I.S. Konev, the actions of the 4th Tank and 3rd Guards Armies in the Lisa area south of Leshno. "Lelyushenko's 4th Panzer Army," he writes, "crossed the Oder and entered the Shteinau area. To the right, Pukhov's 13th Army and Gordov's 3rd Guards Army were operating. Things were moving slowly there. The troops fought fierce battles with the remnants of the 24th Tank and 42nd Army Corps, as well as with formations of the enemy's 9th Field Army. All these forces had previously opposed the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, but now, under their blows, they shifted to the south and entered the area east of Lissa, in the zone of operations of Gordov's army.

In view of the particular complexity of the situation, I had to go to Lelyushenko. His command post was already

on the other side, beyond the Oder. Having reached there and after listening to the commander's report, I set him the task of striking in the northwestern direction, advancing simultaneously on both banks of the Oder, in order to help Gordov. With joint efforts, these two armies were to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping pressed by the 1st Belorussian Front in order to prevent it from crossing the Oder.

I remember this with bitterness, but I must admit that the troops of the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies failed to complete this task to the end. The Nazis maneuvered and passed north of the attack we had planned. Our troops still managed to first surround and then destroy about fifteen thousand enemy soldiers in the Liss region, but the rest nevertheless, albeit with heavy losses, crossed over to the western bank of the Oder. And if on the left wing of the front everything turned out exactly as planned, then the same cannot be said about the actions of the right wing.

From the point of view of the use of available forces and means, the main mistakes were that sometimes decisions were made not on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of the situation and calculated data, but on the intuition of the commander (commander). Unfortunately, there is also a rather frequent phenomenon when the accepted

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the decision, due to the large time spent on bringing it to the executors, did not correspond to the real situation. Forces and means were often dispersed in separate centers of struggle. In a number of cases, the capabilities of friendly forces were overestimated and the capabilities of the enemy, especially maneuvering and firepower, were underestimated. Many complaints were made about the organization of reconnaissance, especially ground reconnaissance, the depth of which was most often limited to 10-12 km. True, there were also objective reasons in this matter - the radio stations available at that time ensured the transmission of information to a maximum of 12-15 km.

A number of serious shortcomings can be traced in the organization of the rear, in the work of the front and army rear establishments, and rear management bodies. One of them is connected with the supply of fuel, especially in the second half of January, when the tank armies and advanced ranks of the combined arms armies went to the Oder (Odra), fought to seize bridgeheads and hold them. By this time, the rear of the 2nd Guards Tank Army lagged behind by 300-470 km, the 3rd Guards Tank Army - by 350-410 km. The supply arm increased from 140 km at the beginning of the operation to 500 km. As a result, out of 16 days of the offensive, the 2nd Guards Tank Army expected fuel for a total of 5 days (30 percent of the time), the 4th Tank Army - 6 days (from January 19 to 24), that is, 33 percent

time from the duration of the operation, actually losing combat capability for such a long time. The forward detachment of the 5th shock army found itself in an almost similar situation, having covered 379 km with battles, and due to lack of fuel had to wait two days for its delivery.

Experts note that there were cases (in the 47th, 69th, 52nd armies) of disruption in the organization of catering for the troops. Not fully, especially on the 1st Belorussian Front, local resources were used rationally. The issues of technical reconnaissance of the area were not always skillfully resolved, in some cases no heads were allocated.

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nye road detachments to restore the destruction on the supply routes. Difficulties in the work of the rear were aggravated by the untimely resolution of the issue of changing the main railway line to the Allied gauge. In the documents on the rear, an unsatisfactory solution to the problems of collecting, recording and storing trophies is noted, which was caused by the ill-conceived work plan of the trophy teams, the lack of people and the limited vehicles allocated to the employees of the trophy departments. The issues of protecting the rear units and institutions were not always resolved satisfactorily.

Significant shortcomings were traced in matters of command and control of troops.

Rarely, for example, were commanders (commanders) used a parallel method of work, the practice of issuing preliminary orders was not used, as a result of which tactical authorities had almost no time left to organize the battle. So, the commander and headquarters of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, upon receiving a new task on the evening of January 20, spent on accepting

Employees of the Political Directorate of the 1st Belorussian Front distribute newspapers to the German population

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decisions, execution and delivery of a combat order took more than 5 hours, the commanders of corps, brigades and battalions had less than 3 hours (and dark time) to prepare for combat operations. Little attention, as a rule, was paid in this case to such a question as exercising control over the fulfillment of given orders and rendering assistance to subordinates.

From archival documents it follows that not all armies, corps and divisions developed schemes for moving command posts, primarily command posts. As a result, new areas of their location turned out to be unprepared for communications (in particular, wired). Significant time was spent on moving: on January 18, it took about 4 hours to deploy and collapse the command post of the 1st Guards Tank Army, and 8.5 hours to advance, which created certain difficulties in maintaining a stable connection. The stability of control also decreased with a significant distance of command posts from subordinates. By January 25, the command post of the 3rd Guards Tank Army was 65-80 km from the command posts of the corps. The flow of information has become much more difficult. Only by January 27, due to the creation of reserve groups of forces and means of communication, the situation was rectified.

A large amount of time was spent on the passage of operational-tactical information. For example, it took from 3 to 7 hours to carry out an army combat order: including 20 percent for transmission and reception, up to 40 percent for encryption and decryption, and up to 40 percent of the time for delivery to the executor. In the 3rd Guards Tank Army, the absence of wire communications at certain stages of the offensive (January 16-17, January 24-25) led to the fact that 42 percent of the documents received at the communication center were transmitted 5-6 hours later than the deadlines. By the way, many commanders (commanders) used radio communications in a very unproductive way. According to the report of the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front, during the operation over radio channels

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slightly more than 1 percent of information was passed by combined-arms armies, more than 2.5 percent by corps and divisions, from 3 to 8 percent by tank armies, and up to 35 percent by tank and mechanized corps.

The beginning of problems also arose in the organization of the wire connection. The fact is that during the period of maximum advance rates in some areas, the construction units did not have time to completely eliminate the imperfections when the wires were restored (cleaning the lines from unrepaired wires, replacing the twists, altering the bindings), which was reflected in the communication work. Due to the lack of automapping, operational units were often late with the acceptance of new operational sites, which made it necessary to temporarily put construction units into operation or weaken the maintenance of the site by increasing it.

Wires on the territory of Western Poland and Germany turned out to be unsuitable for long-distance telegraph communications (a large percentage of two-millimeter and even

1.5 mm wires from various materials - iron, copper, aluminum). This made it necessary to hang domestic four-millimeter wires for communication with Moscow and replace insulators that also turned out to be unsuitable. In addition, parts of the connection turned out to be insufficiently prepared for working with wires made of non-ferrous metals (there was no experience and the necessary tools). The restored underground cable Łódź, Kutno, Poznań also turned out to be unsuitable for long-distance telegraph communications (the Germans used it for telephone communications and tone telegraph).

Due to the fact that the organization of the restoration of the main communication axis, from Warsaw to Łódź, was not thought out, it was seriously slowed down. Due to the lack of front-line communications units, the army communications units of the 1st Polish and 3rd shock armies were involved in the restoration of this axis in this sector, which could not ensure either the timeliness of the work, or their quality. This section has been in operation for a long time.

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bad and demanded the deportation of the front-line communications units to the rear to put it in order. In addition, it was unsuccessfully planned to bypass Warsaw from the south (too close to the city). The solution of this problem was complicated by the fact that the auxiliary communication axis of Łódź, Grudziąz, Varko also worked unstable.

There are also a number of other miscalculations and errors in the activities of the headquarters of the Supreme High Command, commanders (commanders), headquarters, and other control bodies. There is no doubt that all of them had a negative impact on the solution of certain problems at certain stages of the Vistula-Oder operation. However, even with their presence, the success achieved as a result of the actions of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian and 1st Belorussian fronts is obvious. Its main component was the thorough preparation of the operation, the high level of skill in the use of forces and means on the battlefield, the comprehensive support of combat operations, the skillful command and control of troops, the professionalism and mass theorism of soldiers.

Chapter 10

DIALOGUE WITH MARSHAL V.I. CHUIKOV

A year has passed since the end of the Vistula-Oder operation. At the end of January 1946, a military-scientific conference was held in the building of the headquarters of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, dedicated to its analysis. More than twenty people spoke. One of the conference participants, a representative of the General Staff, Major General S.M. Enyukov expressed the idea of the expediency of

due to the Vistula-Oder operation without an operational pause in order to take Berlin on the move back in February 1945. However, then no one supported him. Moreover, speaking with a detailed message, the former commander of the 8th Guards Army, twice Hero of the Soviet Union, General V.I. Chuikov, in January 1946, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, lamented that only five divisions had left his army for the Oder (Odra), and four divisions fought until February 23 to eliminate the encircled enemy in Poznan, which significantly weakened the combat effectiveness of the army operating in the direction of the main attack.

Almost two decades have passed. In 1964, in the journal "October", and then in the journal "New and Contemporary History", memoirs were published at that time of the head of the Civil Defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union V.I. Chuikov (he received this title in 1955, being the commander of the Kyiv military

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The new paper has arrived

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district). In them, quite unexpectedly for the military community, Vasily Ivanovich returned to the question raised at the military scientific conference in January 1946. He stated that "Berlin could have been captured as early as February 1945, which would have brought the end of the war closer, thereby calling into question the expediency of the decision adopted by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and supported by the commanders of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts to end on February 3 1945 Vistula-Oder operation. Marshal V.I. Chuikov reinforced a number of provisions, including the proximity of Berlin (60-80 km remained to the capital of Germany), the possibility, in his opinion, of localizing the attack of an enemy grouping in Pomerania by the forces of one 2nd Belorussian Front, strong in early February 1945, according to him, the compositions of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. As a result, he linked the possibility of capturing Berlin in February 1945 with the improvement in the activities of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. and headquarters of the fronts to organize the supply of troops, they went to the Oder (Odra).

In dialogue with Marshal V.I. Chuikov in the second half of the 60s - early 70s of the last century, a number of military leaders joined. Among them were the former commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, Marshal G.K. Zhukov, former commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal I.S. Konev, former

Chief of the Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Red Army, Lieutenant General (since 1968 Army General) S.M. Shtemenko, a former member of the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian Front, Lieutenant General K.F. Telegin, former head of logistics of the 1st Belorussian Front, Lieutenant General N.A. Antipenko, former commander of the 1st Guards Tank Army, Colonel General of the Tank Forces (since 1959 Marshal of the Armored Forces) M.E. Katukov. Without entering into a debate with Marshal V.I. Chuikov, a number of explanations on the assessment of the capabilities of the Soviet troops and the enemy in the Berlin direction in early February 1945 were made by the former commandant

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blowing troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky.

It seems appropriate to get acquainted with the opinion of these military leaders, so that the reader, 65 years after the end of the Vistula-Oder operation, could draw certain conclusions on this issue.

Recalls Marshal G.K. Zhukov:

"..In his memoirs, V.I. Chuikov asserts that "Berlin could have been captured as early as February"... I must say that not everything was as simple as it seems to V.I. in the offensive operation against Berlin. Chuikov.

On January 26, when it became clear that the enemy would not be able to hold back our offensive on the fortifications on the outskirts of the Oder, we submitted a preliminary proposal to Headquarters, the gist of which was as follows.

By January 30, the troops of the front must reach the line Berlinchen (Barlinek) - Landsberg (Gorzow-Veliko Polski) - Gutz (Grudzisk), pull up the rear, replenish supplies and continue the offensive from the morning of February 1-2 in order to force the Oder on the move. In the future, it was planned to develop a rapid offensive in the Berlin direction, concentrating the main efforts around Berlin from the northeast, north and northwest. On January 27, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command approved this proposal.

On January 28, a similar proposal was sent to the Headquarters by the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev. It boiled down to defeating the Breslavl grouping of the enemy and reaching the Elbe on February 25-28, and taking Berlin by the right wing of the front, in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian. This proposal was approved by the Stavka on 29 January.

Indeed, as V.I. Chuikov, at that time the enemy on the outskirts of Berlin had limited forces, and his defense was quite

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weak. It was clear to us. In this regard, the front command gave the front troops the following orientation:

"To the military councils of all armies, the commander of the military branches and the head of the rear of the front. I report approximate calculations for the next period and a brief assessment of the situation:

1. The enemy in front of the 1st Belorussian Front does not yet have any large counterattack groups. The enemy does not have a continuous front of defense. It is now covering certain areas and is trying to solve the problem of defense by active operations in a number of sectors.

We have preliminary information that the enemy has withdrawn four tank divisions and up to 5-6 infantry divisions from the Western Front, and that these units are being transferred to the Eastern Front. At the same time, the enemy continues to transfer units from the Baltic and East Prussia.

Apparently, in the next 6-7 days, the enemy will concentrate troops brought in from the Baltic and East Prussia on the Schwedt-Stargard-Neusch Tettin line in order to cover Pomerania, prevent us from reaching Stettin and prevent our access to the Pomeranian Bay. The enemy is apparently concentrating the group of troops being transferred from the west in the Berley area with the task of defending the approaches to Berlin.

2. The tasks of the troops of the front are to consolidate the success achieved in the next 6 days by active actions, to bring up everything that is lagging behind, to replenish supplies of up to 2 refuelings of fuel, up to 2 rounds of ammunition, and to take Berlin with a swift rush on February 15-16.

When consolidating the success achieved, that is, from February 4 to February 8, it is necessary:

a) 5th, 8th, 69th, 33rd armies to seize bridgeheads on the western bank of the river. Oder. At the same time, it is desirable for the 8th Guards and 69th armies to have one common bridgehead between Kustrin and Frankfurt. If possible, it would be good to connect the bridgeheads of the 5th and 8th armies;

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I.S. Konev accepts bread and salt from the inhabitants of the liberated city. Right - S.S. Shatilov

6) The 1st Army of the Polish Army, 47, 61, the 2nd Panzer Armies and the 2nd Cavalry Corps must push the enemy back behind the Ratzeburg-Falkenburg-Stargard-Altdam-r. Oder, after which, leaving a barrier until the approach of the armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front, regroup on the river. Oder for a breakthrough;

c) on February 7-8, it is necessary to complete the liquidation of the Poznan-Schneidemuhl group of the enemy;

d) the means of strengthening for a breakthrough will basically remain the same as that of the armies now;

A) for tank troops and self-propelled artillery, by February 10, complete current and medium repairs and put materiel into operation;

e) aviation to complete the deployment, having at least 6 refueling at the airfields;

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g) the rear of the front, the army and military rear, by February 9-10, be fully prepared for the decisive stage of the operation.

Zhukov
Telegin
Malinin.

However, in the first days of February, a serious danger of a counterattack from Eastern Pomerania against the flank and rear of the main grouping of the front advancing towards the Oder began to brew. Here is what German Field Marshal Keitel showed on this subject:

- In February-March 1945, it was planned to conduct a counteroffensive against the troops advancing on Berlin, using the Pomeranian bridgehead for this. It was planned that, having covered themselves in the Grudziadz area, the troops of the Vistula Army Group would break through the Russian front and go through the valleys of the Warta and Netze rivers from the rear to Kustrin.

This idea is also confirmed by Colonel-General Guderian. In his book "Memoirs of a Soldier" he wrote: "The German command intended to deliver a powerful counterattack by the forces of the Vistula Army Group with lightning speed until the Russians pulled up large forces to the front or until they figured out our intentions."

The testimonies cited by the military leaders of fascist Germany leave no doubt that the danger from Eastern Pomerania was real... In early February, the 2nd and 11th German armies, which had 16 infantry, 4 armored, 3 motorized divisions, 4 brigades, 8 battle groups. According to our intelligence, the influx of forces there continued. In addition, the 3rd Panzer Army was located in the Stettin (Szczecin) area, which the Nazi command could use both in the Berlin direction and to strengthen the East Pomeranian group (which actually happened).

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Could the Soviet command take the risk of continuing the offensive with the main forces of the front against Berlin in conditions when such a serious danger loomed from the north?

IN AND. Chuikov writes: "... as for risk, it is not often necessary to go to war. But in this case, the risk was well justified. In the Vistula-Oder operation, our troops have already passed over 500 km, and only 60-80 km remained from the Oder to Berlin.

Of course, this danger could have been ignored, both tank armies and 3-4 combined arms armies could have been sent straight to Berlin and approached it. But with a strike from the north, the enemy would easily break through our cover, reach the crossings on the Oder, and put the troops of the front in the Berlin region in an extremely difficult position. The experience of the war shows that one should take risks, but one should not bury oneself. In this regard, the lesson of the offensive of the Red Army on Warsaw in 1920 is very indicative, when the unsecured and imprudent advance of the Red Army troops led, instead of success, to a heavy defeat on our Western Front.

"If we objectively assess the strength of the grouping of Nazi troops in Pomerania," writes V.I. Chuikov, - then we will make sure that from their side any threat to our strike force in the Berlin direction could well be localized by the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front.

Reality overturns this assertion. At first, the task of defeating the enemy in Eastern Pomerania was planned to be solved precisely by the forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front, but they turned out to be far from enough. The offensive of the 2nd Belorussian Front, which began on February 10, proceeded very slowly. For 10 days, his troops were able to advance only 50-70 kilometers. In it

At the same time, the enemy launched a counterattack in the area south of Stargard, and he even managed to push our troops back and advance southward up to 12 kilometers.

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Assessing the current situation, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided, in order to eliminate the Nazis in Eastern Pomerania, whose forces had by this time increased to forty divisions, to attract four combined arms and two tank armies of the 1st Belorussian Front. As is known, the fighting on the two fronts to defeat the East Pomeranian group ended only by the end of March. What a tough nut it was!

IN AND. Chuikov believes that for the attack on Berlin in February 1945, the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts could allocate 8-10 armies, including 3-4 tank armies.

This also cannot be accepted. In early February, out of eight combined arms and two tank armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, only four incomplete armies remained in the Berlin direction (5th shock, half of the 8th guards, 69th and 33rd). We had to turn the rest of the forces of the front towards Eastern Pomerania in order to defeat the Pomeranian grouping.

As for the 1st Ukrainian Front, in the period from 8 to 24 February, it carried out an offensive operation northwest of Breslau (Wroclaw). The main forces of the front (four combined arms, two tank armies and the 2nd air army) took part in it. The enemy, having brought up significant forces, put up stubborn resistance there. During the 17 days of the offensive, formations of the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced 100 kilometers, reaching the Neiss River. Attempts to force it and develop an offensive to the west were unsuccessful, and the troops of the front went over to the defensive along the eastern bank of the river.

It should also be borne in mind that during the Vistula-Oder operation, our units suffered serious losses. By February 1, the number of rifle divisions averaged about 5,500 people, and in the 8th Guards -

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from 3800 to 4800 people. Two tank armies had 740 tanks (tank brigades averaged about 40, and many of them had 15-20 tanks). The same situation was on the 1st Ukrainian Front.

In addition, the fortress and the city of Poznan, which were far behind the front lines, were still in the hands of the enemy and until February 23 were not taken by the troops personally led by V.I. Chuikov.

Finally, one should not forget about the material support of the troops, who advanced more than 500 kilometers in 20 days of the offensive. Naturally, with such a high rate of advance, the rear from steel and the troops felt the need for material resources, especially fuel. Aviation also could not relocate, since at that time all field airfields became sour from the rain.

IN AND. Chuikov, without analyzing the complexity of the rear situation in those conditions, writes:

"If the Headquarters and the headquarters of the fronts properly organized the supply and managed to deliver the necessary amount of ammunition, fuel and food to the Oder in time, if the aviation had time to relocate to the Oder airfields, and the pontoon-bridge-building units ensured the crossing of troops across the Oder, then our four armies - 5th shock, 8th guards, 1st and 2nd tank - could develop a further offensive against Berlin in early February, go another eighty to a hundred kilometers and finish this gigantic operation by taking the German capital on the move.

Discourse on such an important subject, with so many references to "if only," cannot be considered serious even for a memoirist. But the very recognition of V.I. Chuikov, that the supply went wrong, aviation and pontoon bridge-building units fell behind, suggests that under such conditions it would be the purest gamble to launch a decisive offensive against Berlin.

Thus, in February 1945, neither the 1st Ukrainian nor the 1st Belorussian fronts could carry out the Berlin operation.

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IN AND. Chuikov writes: "On February 4, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front gathered for a meeting at the headquarters of the 69th Army, where he himself arrived, army commanders Berzarin, Kolpakchi, Katukov, Bogdanov and me. We, already sitting at the tables, discussed the plan of attack on Berlin, when the phone rang on the HF unit. I sat almost nearby and heard the conversation on the phone well. Stalin called. He asked Zhukov where he was and what he was doing. The marshal replied that he had gathered the army commanders at the headquarters of Kolpakchi's army and was engaged with them in planning an attack on Berlin.

After listening to the report, Stalin suddenly quite unexpectedly

This, as I understand it, demanded for the front commander to stop this planning and start developing an operation to defeat the Nazi troops of the Vistula Army Group located in Pomerania.

But there was no such meeting on February 4 at the headquarters of the 69th Army. Therefore, a conversation on HF with I.V. Stalin, about whom V.I. Chuikov was also absent.

On February 4-5, I was at the headquarters of the 61st Army, which was deployed on the right wing of the front in Pomerania for operations against the enemy's Pomeranian grouping. The commander of the 1st Guards Tank Army, M.E., could not have been at this mythical meeting. Katukov, since according to the directive of the front of February 2, 1945, on the morning of February 3, he regrouped army troops from the Oder to the Friedeberg-Berlinchen-Landsberg area. The commander of the 2nd Guards Tank Army also could not be at the meeting due to illness (at that time, General A.I. Radzievsky was acting commander). Yes, and V.I. On February 3, Chuikov was in the city of Poznan, from where he reported to me about the course of the struggle for the fortress and the city.

Apparently, memory failed V.I. Chuikov.

It should be noted that on the Oder, the 8th Guards Army V.I. Chuikova came out with only 50% of her compounds. The rest of the forces fought for Posen until February 23.

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After the regrouping of the troops of the front in Pomerania, three and a half armies remained on the Oder, and the situation in the Berlin direction from the very first days of February began to deteriorate. On February 2 and 3, German aviation continuously bombed the combat formations of the 5th shock army of N.E. Berzarin in the captured bridgehead near the Oder River. During these days, enemy aviation made 5,008 sorties, inflicting serious losses on the troops of the 5th shock army. The enemy tried at all costs to eliminate the bridgehead in the Kustrin area. Here, new units began to appear against the bridgehead, transferred from other fronts. Commander of the 5th Shock Army N.E. Berzarin asked to strengthen the actions of our aviation. But because of bad weather, she could not deliver active strikes.

Here is one of my telegrams to the Military Council of the 5th shock army, from which it is easy to get an impression of the current situation:

"To the Military Council of the 5th Shock Army, corps commanders and division commanders of the 5th Shock Army.

The 5th Shock Army was entrusted with a particularly responsible task of holding the captured bridgehead on the western bank of the river. Oder and expand it to at least 20 km along the front and 10-12 km in depth.

I ask all of you to understand the historical responsibility for the fulfillment of the task entrusted to you and, having told your people about this, demand exceptional stamina and valor from the troops.

Unfortunately, we cannot help you with aviation for the time being, since all airfields have become muddy and planes cannot take off into the air. The enemy flies from the Berlin Aero Aroms, which have concrete runways. I recommend:

- 1) burrow deep into the ground;
- 2) organize massive anti-aircraft fire;
- 3) switch to night actions, each time attacking with a limited target;
- 4) repulse enemy attacks during the day.

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I wish you and the troops under your command a historically important success, which you not only can, but must ensure.

G. Zhukov.

IN AND. Chuikov claims that the question of the possibility of taking Berlin back in February 1945 was raised by him for the first time at a military scientific conference in Berlin in 1946, but then he did not receive wide coverage. Indeed, this question was raised at the conference, but not by V.I. Chuikov, and the representative of the General Staff, Major General S.M. Enyukov. The author of the memoirs, as far as I remember and as can be seen from the transcript of his speech, did not say a word on this issue.

Marshal I.S. Konev:

"The Lower Silesian operation, as a development of the Vistula-Oder operation, was planned by us at the very end of January 1945, on the crest of the success of the Vistula-Oder operation, as its direct continuation. We sent the initial plan to Headquarters on January 28, and it was approved there without any changes. It must, however, be said at once that our intentions, which formed the basis of this plan, were not destined to come true...

It was planned to strike the main blow from two large

bridgeheads on the Oder - north and south of Breslau. As a result, the encirclement of this heavily fortified city was to follow, and then, taking or leaving it in the rear, we intended to develop the offensive with the main grouping directly to Berlin. At the same time, the troops of the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front were to defeat the enemy in the Dresden direction. At the same time, we counted on the assistance of our neighbor on the left, the 4th Ukrainian Front.

In fact, in sixteen days of fighting, by February 24, we had completed only part of the task set for ourselves. Surrounding the garrisons of Breslau and Glogau, our troops advanced in the main direction of the soil.

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ty for a hundred and fifty kilometers, went with the right wing to the Neisse River, to the level of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, and entrenched here.

A pause was needed for the advance to continue. Indeed, even without that, on our front, one offensive operation, in essence, without any respite, grew into another. We advanced continuously for forty-four days and fought from five hundred to seven hundred kilometers. On average, for every day, the troops advanced sixteen kilometers. There is no need to blush for such results. But they do not relieve me of the need to explain why, nevertheless, the operation was planned by us at one depth, but in practice it was carried out at a different, much smaller one.

Leaving aside a number of less significant circumstances, I must mention here three main reasons.

First, at the end of January, when planning this operation, we believed that our further offensive to the west would take place simultaneously with the ongoing offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 4th Ukrainian fronts. However, in reality it turned out differently. Just in the period between the approval of the plan of our offensive and its beginning, the 1st Belorussian Front faced an urgent task - to liquidate the Eastern Pomeranian grouping of Nazi troops that threatened it. In this regard, at the direction of the Stavka, he was forced to abandon the further offensive in the Berlin direction and, after reaching the Oder, to gain a foothold on the achieved lines, at the same time preparing a strike in Pomerania. The situation with our left neighbor, the 4th Ukrainian Front, aimed at Czechoslovakia, also became more complicated. He faced the most stubborn resistance of the enemy and hardly advanced.

Secondly, already during the operation we had to kill

last that at the end of January we underestimated the capabilities of the enemy in restoring the combat effectiveness of our units and formations, which we defeated on

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Vistula and Oder. He did it much faster and more decisively than we could have imagined.

And finally, thirdly, an offensive on the scale originally planned was made very difficult by the enormous stretching of our communications...

..Unfavorable meteorological conditions severely limited the combat work of our aviation. Almost all field airfields became sour, out of order; concrete runways remained deep in the rear, and the aircraft that were then in service worked only at the maximum range, and even then not all of them. The 2nd Air Army, which was part of the front, at that time numbered two thousand three hundred and eighty combat vehicles, and during the day an average of only five hundred and forty-six sorties were made. With a front width of five hundred and twenty kilometers, it carried out, in essence, only reconnaissance tasks.

To the left of us, the 4th Ukrainian Front was still unsuccessful. The 1st Belorussian Front fought fierce battles in Pomerania, and at the junction with us, along the Oder, it temporarily went over to the defensive. Under these conditions, the enemy was able to throw quite significant reinforcements into our offensive zone. The balance of power changed every day in favor of the enemy.

All this, taken together, led the front command to the conclusion that in the near future we would not be able to achieve the goals outlined in our original plan, and that an attack on Berlin was not yet possible.

Ideas about further actions were reported to the Headquarters, taking into account the changed situation. I would like to quote some points of the new plan, submitted on February 16 to Headquarters ...

Despite all their offensive impulse, the troops were at the limit of fatigue, and it would be completely unrealistic to plan anything beyond that stipulated by the document of February 16th. No matter how bitter it was for us to temporarily abandon the goals that were set in the original plan, approved by Stav

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which at the end of January, we considered it our duty to watch

face it, and in the changed situation, to focus attention on those tasks that could really be solved at this stage.

There is an opinion (I am aware of this): perhaps the Lower Silesian operation should not have been carried out at all; front from Berlin. Thinking about this, I, in turn, ask the question: what would the last, final operation of the war, the Berlin one, look like if we had not moved forward from the Oder to the Neisse in advance, at the cost of enormous tension and inhuman efforts? It would have been given to us with great difficulty, and in the long run the time for the fall of Berlin and the liberation of Prague would have been much later.

The following opinion was also expressed: even then, in February, to launch a direct attack on Berlin. But the results and lessons of the Lower Silesian operation completely refute this superficial opinion.

Recalls Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky:

"... In Eastern Pomerania, where the troops entered, we stumbled upon desperate resistance. The enemy has concentrated large forces here. They outnumbered ours, and if we were still able to push him under such circumstances, then this was proof of the high skill of the commanders and the mass heroism of the soldiers. Our units have been in continuous offensive battles for a month now. And before there was a shortage in personnel, now people have completely diminished. No matter how clever we were, we did not manage to create, even for a short time, a superiority in forces and means in some areas, without which it was impossible to break through the enemy defenses. The fighting was stubborn, but we only pressed the enemy troops. And as this width of the front stretched. The troops stretched out into a thread, and still fill the formation

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the gap between our left wing and the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, we could not ...

As before, the situation remained very difficult: half of the troops of the front were turned to the east - against the East Prussian grouping, the second half was advancing to the west. We struggled to keep up with our left neighbor. But he was already approaching the Oder River in the Kustra direction. We couldn't keep up with him. Having regrouped part of the forces from the right wing to the left during the fighting, we managed to move a little more to the west, and here we ran out of steam

finally.

Meanwhile, the main grouping of the 1st Belorussian Front, which had already become involved in the battles for the bridgeheads on the Oder, remained poorly covered from the north, from Eastern Pomerania.

German officers taken prisoner in the Chojnice area testified that the fascist command was preparing a strike with large forces on the flank of the Soviet troops advancing towards the Oder. In view of this threat, in the first days of February we made a significant strengthening of our left flank so that timely assistance could be provided to the 1st Belorussian Front. The 49th Army, withdrawn from the battle on the right wing, was transferred here. The 330th and 369th rifle divisions, which were previously in the front reserve, were also pulled up here. The 3rd Guards Cavalry Corps from the right wing was transferred to the left flank, remaining in the reserve of the front. Artillery was also regrouped: on the left wing we transferred two breakthrough artillery divisions, one division and three separate brigades of heavy rocket artillery, two anti-tank brigades, two corps artillery brigades, two anti-aircraft artillery divisions and other units ...

By that time, the composition of the enemy grouping opposing our front had also become clear. There were formations of the 2nd German field army - two armored, fourteen infantry divisions, four

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infantry brigades, two battle groups, four independent infantry regiments, fifteen independent infantry battalions. In total, they numbered about 230 thousand soldiers and officers, 700 tanks and self-propelled guns, 300 armored personnel carriers, 20 armored trains, 3360 guns and mortars (excluding coastal defense guns and forts) and more than 300 combat aircraft for various purposes. In addition, it could be expected that the Nazis would be able to transfer here up to five more infantry divisions from Courland. According to the reconnaissance data we had, units of the 126th, 290th, 225th and 93rd infantry divisions from Army Group Kurland were already on their way. The headquarters of the 1st Belorussian Front informed us that in front of its right wing, facing north, the troops of the 11th Army of the enemy were operating, consisting of eight infantry, three motorized, four tank and one airfield divisions, two tank brigades and four independent tank battalions. with reinforcements - about 200 thousand soldiers and officers, 700 tanks and self-propelled guns, 2500 guns and mortars and up to 300 aircraft.

This information about the enemy, confirmed by

personal types of reconnaissance and the testimony of numerous prisoners, led to the conclusion that the enemy in Eastern Pomerania has significant forces, which can increase every day ...

The fights got harder and harder. On February 19, the 65th, 49th, and 70th armies were able to push the enemy back to the north and northwest from only 15 to 40 kilometers, reaching the line of Mene, Cherek, Chojnice. Here our troops were forced to stop. The 1st Belorussian Front was also unable to advance further. His neighboring 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps was stopped at the Landsk-Rederitz line. The 1st Army of the Polish Army fought at the Deutsch, Fulbeck, Kallke line. In the rear of these troops, a struggle was going on with enemy units surrounded in Schneidemühl and Poznan. The situation in the north remained the same: the enemy firmly held Pomerania.

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I was summoned to the HF by the Chief of the General Staff A.M. Vasilevsky, informed the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front G.K. Zhukov to go on the offensive against the East Pomeranian non-friendly grouping in order to eliminate the threat hanging over his flank, and asked me how the 2nd Belorussian intends to act in this case. I expressed the opinion that it would be highly desirable for us to strike the main blow on our left flank, combining it with the main blow of the neighbor's troops ...

Alexander Mikhailovich said that this is exactly how he imagines the course of the future operation, and he called to get my opinion. For my part, I expressed the wish that the blow be delivered by the troops of both fronts simultaneously. Vasilevsky promised to foresee this. The option of a joint strike by the troops of the two fronts on the center of the East Pomeranian grouping was a cardinal solution to the problem of eliminating the threat looming in the north and accelerated the start of the Berlin operation.

Recalls Army General S.M. Shtemenko:

"From the very beginning, the last campaign of the war with Nazi Germany was supposed to be carried out in two stages. At the first stage, active operations were to continue primarily on the old, so to speak, direction - the southern flank of the Soviet-German front in the Budapest area. The break here was expected to be created by the withdrawal of the main forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front in the interfluvium of the Tisza and Duvan to the area south of Kecskemét. They could assist the 2nd Ukrainian Front from there with strikes to the northwest,

and west. We hoped that the troops of these two fronts, in close interaction, would be able to advance at high speed and in 20-25 days they would reach the line of Banska Bystrica, Komarno, Nagykanizsa, and a month later, at the end of December, they would reach the approaches to Vienna. We had no doubt that the inevitable

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the threat of defeating the southern flank will force the German command to transfer additional forces here from the Berlin direction, and this, in turn, will create favorable conditions for the advance of our main forces - those fronts that were located north of the Carpathians. The General Staff believed that by the beginning of 1945 the Red Army had reached Bromberg in the lower reaches of the Vistula, taken Poznan, captured the borders of Breslau, Pardubice, Jihlava and Vienna, that is, would have advanced 120-350 kilometers from the line of its October disposition. After that, the second stage of the campaign began, as a result of which Germany was supposed to capitulate.

... On February 1, 1945, the troops of the 5th shock, and after it the 8th guards armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, made a throw to the western bank of the Oder and part of the forces captured small bridgeheads in the area of the Kustrin fortress. The fortress itself remained, however, in the hands of the enemy. To the south, the 69th Army entered the Oder, in the zone of which, near Frankfurt, the Germans, in turn, held a bridgehead. The 33rd Army also reached the Oder. This was followed by a small gap, and then the neighboring 1st Ukrainian Front occupied a ledge to the south of the position along the Oder. At this line, the Soviet troops were stopped. The operational situation was unfavorable for us. The 1st Belorussian Front moved forward, rushing towards Berlin, but at the moment unable to capture it. In the Berlin direction, he actually had only four combined arms and two tank armies in a weakened composition. In addition to heavy combat losses, two of them (8th Guards and 69th) were forced to leave part of their forces to fight the encircled Poznan garrison, and one (5th shock), along with the attack on Berlin, continued the siege of Kustrin.

The rest of their combined arms armies to Marshal G.K. Zhukov had to turn north in the direction of Eastern Pomerania, where the enemy was accumulating significant forces and putting up fierce resistance.

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to our troops as they advance through Poland. Gradually, the 1st Belorussian Front formed

was called a flank stretched for hundreds of kilometers. Both were backed by the 3rd shock, 1st Polish, 47th and 61st armies. Moreover, some of their forces were diverted to fight the encircled German troops in Schneidemühl and other settlements. The stretching of the flank made it impossible to create a sufficiently powerful strike force in the main direction, and the growing resistance of the enemy concealed the threat of a breakthrough to our rear. This threat became even more real because between the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts there was a huge and almost unsecured gap ...

Under the circumstances, the Germans could seize the initiative from us and frustrate the planned operation. They closely followed our actions even at the end of January, when we decided on a non-stop attack on Berlin, they had already begun to implement some important countermeasures. Several officer schools and reserve formations were moved to the Oder, where the main forces of the 9th Army were defending. The defense of the Berlin direction was generally entrusted to the SS department, and Himmler himself was appointed commander of the newly created Army Group Vistula. Initially, this group included the 9th and 2nd armies ...

However, the enemy's possibilities for building up forces in the most important strategic directions, including Berlin, were not exhausted by this. At the Crimean Conference of the Leaders of the Three Great Powers on February 4, 1945, the following data were given:

"a) Our front has already appeared: from the central regions of Germany - 9 divisions, from the Western European front - 6 divisions, from Italy - 1 division. In total - 16 divisions.

6) Are in the transfer: 4 tank divisions, 1 motorized division. In total - 5 divisions.

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c) Up to 30-35 divisions will probably be redeployed (at the expense of the Western European front, Norway, Italy and the reserves located in Germany).

Thus, an additional 35-40 divisions may appear on our front.

If we consider that many of these divisions were replenished by the enemy with personnel to the norm, and our divisions then averaged 4,000 people each, if we take into account all the difficulties that we experienced with the delivery of ammunition, fuel and other materiel, as well as temporary dominance in the air of German aviation, it becomes quite obvious why for us

it became impossible to continue the non-stop offensive against Berlin. This would be a crime, which, of course, neither the Soviet Supreme High Command, nor the General Staff, nor the front commanders could commit.

.. Simultaneously with the data on major regroupings of enemy troops, the General Staff received information about the intention of the fascist German command to take advantage of the unfavorable defensive position of the advanced armies of the 1st Belorussian Front and cut them off with counter attacks to the south - from the Arnswalde region in Pomerania and to the north from the Glogau-Guben line in Silesia. It is now known that this plan was advocated by G. Guderian, Chief of the General Staff of the German Land Forces, and had to be carried out with lightning speed until we brought up sufficiently large forces here. Already in the last days of January, the enemy was carrying out practical work to coordinate the actions of the troops involved in the implementation of such a plan ...

First of all, it was necessary to frustrate the enemy plans for counterattacks from Eastern Pomerania and Silesia, and quickly defeat the Nazi troops concentrated on the flanks. It was unthinkable to solve such a problem by private operations of the 1st Belorussian Front. It required a combination of efforts of three fronts: the 2nd Belorussian,

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1st Belarusian and 1st Ukrainian. In practice, it was envisaged as early as February 8 to begin the operation of the 1st Ukrainian Front, in the course of which to defeat a very strong enemy grouping in Lower Silesia and thereby remove the threat of a flank attack from this direction. Just as immediately, the 2nd Belorussian Front was to turn into Eastern Pomerania, defeat the 2nd German Army there and reach the ports of the Baltic Sea. Finally, the main forces of the 1st Belorussian Front, including its tank armies, were to turn against the Stargard grouping hanging over its flank.

Such a plan fully corresponded to the tasks of the moment and was adopted by the Headquarters.

Recalls Lieutenant General K.F. Telegin:

"IN AND. Chuikov claims the possibility of an attack on the German capital in February 1945.

In my opinion, the continuation of the attack on Berlin without an operational pause would mean complete disregard

the danger of a strong blow from the enemy on the exposed right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front from Eastern Pomerania. Army Group Vistula was a serious and dangerous force that could not be ignored. Without the elimination of this threat on the weakly covered flank, which, moreover, had a large gap with the 2nd Belorussian Front, there was nothing to think about an attack on Berlin. As I recall, the Headquarters agreed with the proposal of the front command to speed up the preparation of an attack on Berlin by the forces of the center and the left wing. But after it turned out that the forces of the 2nd Belorussian Front were clearly not enough, and the Vistula group began to push our right-flank armies, we had to turn two tank armies and cavalry corps to the north, completely switch the 3rd shock army and 1st Army of the Polish Army. By the combined forces of the two fronts, the danger was eliminated, Pomerania was cleared

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on the. In essence, this meant the liquidation of an entire enemy front in the sector from the Oder to Danzig. Only after that were favorable conditions created for the Berlin operation.

One need only carefully weigh all these facts to make sure that the unstoppable offensive of the 1st Belorussian Front in February 1945 would mean, in essence, a reckless move into a trap set by the enemy. We must not forget about the political aspects of the situation. It is no secret that any failure of ours at the front would inevitably make it easier for the Nazis to conspire with the reactionary circles of our Western allies against the Soviet country.

...I remember one of our detailed conversations with G.K. Zhukov. This conversation took place at the very beginning of February, when the front stabilized, all enemy attempts to liquidate the bridgeheads captured by our troops were repulsed, and it was time to decide on further actions.

G.K. I found Zhukov in his office. Georgy Konstantinovich was sitting at the table, bending over a map of Europe on an unusually small scale. All the lines of the Soviet-German front and the position of the Allied forces were carefully marked on this map. Catching my somewhat surprised look, Zhukov spread the map sheet with the palms of his strong hands and, smiling slightly, said:

"Sometimes a view from a great height reveals a lot of things that you can't see when looking at the same thing point-blank.

Inviting to take a seat nearby, G.K. Zhukov moved the map closer to me, drew the blunt end of a pencil along the line of the right flank of our front - a flank that was completely turned to the north and, as I knew, was noticeably extended.

- What does this dent from Stargardt to Deutsch-Krone testify to? What does it warn about?

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— Well... — somewhat puzzled by the unusual scale of the map, and by the question, which concealed some kind of conclusion, although guessed, but not fully understood by me. "According to the first impression, the enemy's intention is to take advantage of the extendedness of our weakened flank..." I began.

- That's it! Georgy Konstantinovich confirmed, and, translating his thoughts into the language of graphics, he resolutely drew a thick line on the map with a blue pencil, cutting off the ledge formed by the wedging of our troops that had reached the Oder. "This is what practically hung over all our intentions! We are counting the number of enemy troops in Berlin, where we are ready to break into without looking back, while the main enemy forces are hovering over our right flank here and are just waiting for us to put into action our plan to storm Berlin. Then they will hit us on the hump!

I confess that it was not the slightly excited tone or the choice of expressions that surprised me...

I was surprised by the self-critical frankness with which he, in fact, admitted that the orientation of the troops for the planned capture of Berlin was at least not well thought out.

- You know, - confidentially revealing himself (which happened, frankly, infrequently), Zhukov somehow easily and imperceptibly switched to "you", - at first I was even surprised by some discrepancy in the alignment of forces among the enemy. After all, we do not hide the fact that we intend to enter Berlin in the near future. Why, as evidenced by intelligence data, are there fewer forces compared to those that hung over our right flank \$..

I decided to play for the opponents without any giveaway! What should he logically do if we now once again return the offensive to Berlin? Obviously, to prepare strong defensive fortifications at every kilometer of the path of the advancing troops. And when the advancing troops are drawn in, they will spend on intermediate lines

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we have a significant part of our forces and means - to strike from the north at their, that is, our, rear, cut off the advancing grouping from the supply bases and crush it with a simultaneous blow from the front and rear, maybe even try to encircle them on the very threshold of their defeat, drag out the end of the war, achieve negotiations with our allies, look for ways to get out of the war with the least losses. That's what the enemy was up to, in my opinion!

I listened to Zhukov and involuntarily recalled how two years ago General V.V. Kryukov, with his cavalry-mechanized group, in the offensive near Kursk in the winter of 1943, rushed into the depths of the enemy's defenses, and how later the troops of the whole army rescued the corps commander who was carelessly carried away, like General P.I. Batov almost a year later managed to repeat a similar maneuver near Parichi in Belarus. He was also rescued, although at the cost of the loss of Parichi, but the front was restored.

Now something like this could well be repeated on the scale of the front literally at the walls of the capital of the practically defeated fascist Reich!"

Recalls Lieutenant General N.A. Antipenko:

"It is impossible not to object to Comrade. IN AND. Chuikov, who wrote in his memoirs that we had enough strength to continue the Vistula-Oder operation up to Berlin and capture the capital of Nazi Germany back in February 1945. At that time, attacking Berlin with extremely limited material resources and desperate resistance from the enemy would have been extremely reckless. We are not talking about other factors of externally non-political significance, which could not be ignored at this final stage of the war ...

.. The provision of troops with ammunition and fuel by the time they reached the Oder was 0.3-0.5 combat sets and 0.5 refueling. This was only enough to fight for the capture and holding of bridgeheads on the Oder. Meanwhile, the enemy's counterattacks intensified on the Kustrinsky bridgehead, repelling which we bore pain

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our losses. To say that in this situation it was necessary to go non-stop to Berlin in order to take it on February 10-12 is, to say the least, frivolous. Meanwhile, now, more than 20 years later, they are trying to approve (October magazine, No. 4, 1964, memoirs

IN AND. Chuikov ("The End of the Third Reich") that the front commander made a mistake by not moving his troops right on the move directly to Berlin. But how could one ignore the threat from the north and the state of the rear?

"I had to take the risk." But the art of war lies precisely in being able to distinguish between smart risk and gamble ...

The rear situation was far from conducive to the immediate movement of our troops to Berlin. The operational-strategic situation corresponded even less to this in connection with the delay in the withdrawal of troops of the 2nd Byelorussian Front to the Oder and the slow advance of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front to the west. The movement of troops of the 1st Belorussian Front beyond the Oder with unsecured flanks could only lead to compromising the grandiose offensive of the Soviet troops in January 1945.

According to the same memoirist, by February 1945 Berliners were supposedly morally quite ripe for the overthrow of Hitler - if only a push would be given from outside. But such reasoning is unlikely to be grounded. The stubbornness with which the Nazis fought until the last hour of the war is well known. In the battles for Berlin, our two armies - the 8th Guards and the 5th Shock - lost 25 percent of their personnel. The many days of struggle of the encircled garrisons in Posen and Schneidemühl testify to the same stubbornness.

From the indiscriminate and premature offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front on Berlin, we were kept by the foresight and forethought of the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, on the one hand, and a real understanding of the situation by the front command, on the other ... "

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Marshal of the Armored Forces M.E. Katukov:

"So, the Vistula-Oder operation ended. As a result of the rapid offensive of the Soviet troops, a gap was formed in the strategic front of fascist Germany in the east. On the western bank of the Oder, our troops captured several important bridgeheads. It seemed that the way to Berlin was open. One more blow, and the defeat of fascism can be completed, and the countries of Europe will finally find here the long-awaited peace.

As far as I know, at first the Headquarters and the front command, using their success, intended to capture Berlin after a short preparation. But still, the further attack on Berlin had to be temporarily postponed. And here are the reasons. In-

first, the rear of our front lagged behind; secondly, the garrisons of the besieged cities of Schneidemühl, Poznań, Küstrin and Breslau have not yet laid down their arms behind us. And most importantly, at the beginning of 1945, the Nazi command began to put together a strong grouping in Eastern Pomerania, at the head of which the Fuhrer placed his most fanatical follower, Reichsführer SS Himmler. It was not difficult to unravel the plan of the leaders of the Wehrmacht. They intended to hit the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front, which had rushed forward, cut its rear communications, and thereby disrupt the attack on Berlin.

So, the reader has the opportunity to get acquainted with different points of view in assessing the decision of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to complete the Vistula-Oder operation in the first days of February 1945.

The opinion of Marshal V.I. Chuikova: The 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts could and should have launched an offensive against Berlin without any operational pause. By refusing to do so, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the general staff, and the commanders of the front troops made a miscalculation in assessing the situation and the capabilities of the Soviet troops operating in the Berlin area.

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It appears that the opponents of Marshal V.I. Chuikova quite convincingly substantiated the legitimacy and expediency of the decision taken by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. Arguments about the possibility of an attack on Berlin in February 1945 remain assumptions, wishes, not tested by practice. It is known that history does not tolerate the subjunctive mood, but is based on facts. The facts show that only after the completion of the East Pomeranian, Lower and Upper Silesian operations, the Soviet troops were able to successfully carry out the Berlin operation.

Concluding the consideration of the question raised, I would like to note that it was not posed by chance. The fact is that in our days the point of view of V.I. Chuikov is supported by individual historians, especially foreign ones, making various military-political conclusions on this basis that contradict historical truth, in fact, falsify history.

Conclusion

By reaching the Oder (Odra) and capturing bridgeheads on its left bank, the Red Army completed one of the largest strategic operations of the Great Patriotic War. In the Vistula-Oder operation were

the most important tasks of the final campaign have been solved. Soviet troops defeated the main forces of the fascist German army group "A", liberated a significant part of Poland with its capital Warsaw and transferred the fighting to the territory of Germany. Thanks to this, the Polish people, who had suffered for five and a half years under the yoke of the Nazi invaders, gained independence. During the offensive, Soviet troops freed tens of thousands of citizens of various nationalities from fascist captivity. By February 15, 49,500 liberated were registered at the collection points of the 1st Ukrainian Front alone. In addition, many Soviet people alone and in groups made their way to their homeland.

Having invaded the borders of fascist Germany along the Oder (Odra) river, deploying military operations on enemy territory, the troops of the Red Army approached Berlin 60-70 kilometers and thus created favorable prerequisites for a successful offensive in the subsequent Berlin and Dresden directions. During the operation, Soviet troops destroyed 35 enemy divisions and inflicted more than 60-75 percent losses on the other 25 divisions. They forced the tytler command to regroup on the price

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about 40 additional divisions and a large number of military equipment from the Western and Italian fronts, from their own reserves and from other sectors of the Soviet-German front.

"The influence of the January offensive of the Soviet armies from the Vistula line immediately affected the Western Front. We have long been anxiously awaiting the transfer of our troops to the east, and now it was carried out with the utmost speed. This was written by a participant in the operation in the Ardennes, the former commander of the 5th Nazi Panzer Army, General von Manteuffel. Indeed, the hit of the Red Army, unprecedented in strength, inflicted on the enemy in January 1945, led primarily to the fact that on the very first day of the Vistula-Oder operation, the Nazi troops on the Western Front, including the 5th and 6th and tank armies, stopped their offensive, within 5-6 days they were withdrawn from the front and regrouped to the east - against the advancing Soviet troops. Thus, the offensive of the fascist German troops in the west, in the Ardennes, was thwarted, and the Anglo-American troops were saved from catastrophe and a repetition of the shameful Dunkirk. The summer of 1940, when the British, French and Belgian troops suffered a severe defeat.

"The offensive of the Soviet troops from the Vistula to the Oder," noted Marshal G.K. Zhukov - a brilliant example

the largest strategic offensive operation, which developed without any pauses at an average daily rate of 25-30 kilometers, and by tank armies at an average rate of up to 45 kilometers, in some days even up to 70 kilometers. Such swiftness was achieved for the first time during the Great Patriotic War. The large scale of the strategic operation, its speed were due primarily to the improvement in the general situation at the front, the high fighting spirit of the Soviet troops, the further change in the balance of forces in our favor and the steady growth of combat and operational-strategic art.

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"When studying the Vistula-Oder operation," emphasized Marshal I.S. Konev, one can come across examples of both classical forms of encirclement of the enemy, and the struggle for encirclement, and the destruction of enemy groupings in the rear of our troops. Choosing one or another form of operational maneuver, we each time proceeded from the specific situation that had developed, and it was distinguished by great diversity. After all, both sides were maneuvering, and completely unexpected situations arose all the time on the battlefield, requiring quick and bold creative decisions.

The Vistula-Oder operation, grandiose in concept, scope and skill, was highly appreciated by both our allies and the enemy. In the message of W. Churchill I.V. Stalin of January 27, 1945, it was said: "We are fascinated by your glorious victories over a common enemy and the powerful forces that you put up against him. Please accept our warmest gratitude and congratulations on the historic deeds."

Foreign press, radio commentators and military observers paid great attention to the victorious offensive of the Red Army in January 1945, unanimously acknowledging that it surpassed all offensive operations of the Second World War. The New York Times newspaper wrote on January 18, 1945: "... the Russian offensive is developing with such lightning speed, before which the campaigns of German troops in Poland in 1939 and in France in 1940 pale ... After the breakthrough of the German lines, the Russians split the enemy troops retreating to the Oder ... "The American military observer Hanson Baldwin published an article "The Russian offensive changes the strategic nature of the war", in which he stated that "the colossal Russian winter offensive changed the entire strategic face of the war in an instant . The Red Army is now advancing with fighting towards the borders of German Silesia... The war has reached a new critical moment, critical for Germany. Breakthrough of the German Li-

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ing on the Vistula may soon turn the siege of Germany into a campaign in Germany itself. The English official The Times wrote on January 20, 1945: "The Germans are fleeing southern Poland... The enemy is not faced with the question of where he can gain a foothold on the open plains between the Vistula and Berlin, but whether he will be able to stop at all. That this is very doubtful is evidenced by the appeals with which the Nazi government addresses the army and the people. It recognizes that never before in the entire war has the German front been under such pressure as it is now in the east, and declares that the continued existence of the Reich is at stake ... "

The January offensive of the Red Army in 1945 was no less highly regarded by West German military historians. The former general of the Nazi army F. Mellenthin wrote: "... the Russian offensive developed with unprecedented strength and swiftness. It was clear that their Supreme High Command had completely mastered the technique of organizing the offensive of huge mechanized armies... It is impossible to describe everything that happened between the Vistula and the Oder in the first months of 1945. Europe has not known anything like it since the fall of the Roman Empire.

The victory in the Vistula-Oder operation was achieved thanks to the skillful leadership of the troops, mass heroism, active and continuous political work. For heroism and high military skill, successful fulfillment of tasks, thousands of soldiers and officers were awarded orders and medals, many were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and the commanders of the armies, Generals S.I. Bogdanov, P.S. Rybalko, V.I. Chuikov, corps commander General V.A. Glazunov and officers A.E. Borovykh, N.I. Goryushkin, I.I. Gusakovskii, S.V. Khokhryakov, A.P. Shilin, P.I. Shurukhin were awarded this title for the second time. For the exemplary performance of combat missions in the offensive from the Vistula of the Oder AO, 1192 formations and units of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were awarded orders.

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Many regiments, brigades, divisions, and corps received honorary names in honor of the cities in which they distinguished themselves. Twenty-five times Moscow saluted the troops in honor of the victories in the Vistula-Oder operation.

Summing up the results of the winter offensive of the Soviet troops, the Supreme Commander in the order of February 23, 1945 noted that "the Red Army

brought down on the enemy an unprecedented blow on the entire front from the Baltic to the Carpathians. Over a distance of 1,200 kilometers, she broke through the powerful German defenses, which they had been building up over a number of years. During the offensive, the Red Army quickly and skillfully pushed the enemy back far to the west. Soviet troops with stubborn battles advanced from the borders of East Prussia to the lower reaches of the Vistula - 270 kilometers, from the bridgehead on the Vistula south of Warsaw to the lower reaches of the Oder River - 570 kilometers, from the Sandomierz bridgehead into the depths of German Silesia - 480 kilometers.

The Vistula-Oder operation demonstrated the superiority of Soviet military strategy and tactics over the military strategy and tactics of the enemy. The Soviet troops showed high morale, excellent training, and the ability to use first-class military equipment. |

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Chronicle of events

January 6, 1945. W. Churchill turned to I.V. Stalin with a message, which contained a request to inform whether the western allies of the USSR could count on a major Soviet offensive "on the Vistula front or somewhere else during January and at any other moments."

7. I.V. Stalin sent a message to W. Churchill stating: The Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command decided to complete preparations at an accelerated pace and, regardless of the weather, open wide offensive operations on the central sector of the Soviet-German front no later than the second half of January.

9. Instructions from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the fronts on the postponement of the deadlines.

12. Going on the offensive of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front (the beginning of the Sandomierz-Akles operation). Liberation of the cities of Stopnica and Szydłów.

13. Entering the battle of the 3rd Guards. and 4th tank armies.

The liberation of the cities of Busko-Zdrój, Wislice (Wislice) and Khmilnik.

14. Going on the offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front (the beginning of the Warsaw-Poznan operation), the 65th and 70th armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front.

15. Going on the offensive of the 38th Army of the 4th Ukrainian Front.

Entering the battle of the 47th Army, 1st Guards. tank army of the 1st Belorussian Front.

Liberation of the cities of Kielce (1st UV), Kozenice and Solets (1st BF).

16, Entering the battle of the 2nd Guards. Tank Army of the 1st Belorussian Front.

Liberation of the cities of Belobzhets, Varka, Ilzha, Gruiets (Gruets), Edlensk (Jedlinsk), Radan, Radansko (1st BF), Ished Buzh (1st UV).

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17. Entering the battle of the 1st Polish Army of the 1st Belorussian Front.

The cities of Warsaw, Spornowice (1st BF), Chen Stochova (1st UV) were liberated.

Troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front crossed the Pili Tsai Varta River.

18. Troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front linked up with the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front.

The liberation of the cities of Lovich, Sokhachev, Tomasov (Toma shuv), Mozowiecki (1st BF), Piotrkow (Petrkow - Trybunalski) (1st UV).

19. Advanced units of the 1st Ukrainian Front entered the territory of Germany.

Entering the battle of the 21st Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

The cities of Wielun, Krakow (1st UV), Gostynen, Kutno, Lenchica, Lodz (1st BF) were liberated.

20. The liberation of the cities of Brzeŷci - Kujawski, Wroc Lavsk, Kalo (1st BF), Pitsheni (Bychena) (1st UV).

21. The troops of the shock group of the 1st Ukrainian Front entered the territory of Silesia.

The liberation of the cities of Alexandrov (Alexandruw-Kujawski), Argendu (Gniewkovo), Inowroclaw, Labyshyn (1st BF), Gutentag (Dobrodzen), Kraizburg (Klünberg), Landsberg (Gazhuv-Slensky), Rosenberg (Olesno) (1 th UV).

22. Advanced units of the 1st Ukrainian Front reached the Oder (Odra) River.

The cities of Bernstadt (Berutow), Karlmarkt (Karlowice), Milic, Noms (Nomysłów), Toast (1st UV), Gnezen (Gniezno) (1st BF) were liberated.

23. Liberation of the cities of Bydgoszcz, Kalin (1st BF), Ravich, Trachenberg (Zh migrud) (1st UV).

24. The liberation of the cities of Gleiwitz (Glewice), Oppeln (Opole), Chzhanow (Khshanow) (1st UV).

25. Troops of the 1st Belorussian Front crossed the Varta River.

Liberation of the city of Els (Olesnitsa). Ostrow (Ostrow Wielkopolski) (1st UV).

26. The city of Hindenburg (Zabzhe) was liberated (1st UV).

27. Troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front liberated the prisoners of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz.

The cities of Dombrov-Gurne (Dombrow-Gurnicha), Myslowice, Seminovits (Seminovice-Slensk), Sosnowiec, Chelyadz (1st UV) were liberated.

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28. Troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front liberated the Upper Silesian industrial region.

The cities of Bauten (Bytol), Katowice, Krulev ska Guta (Chorzow), Lukatz-Kreutz (Krzyzh), Mikaluw (1st UV), Waldenberg (Dobegnew) (1st BF) were liberated.

29. Troops of the 1st Belorussian Front crossed the German border west and northwest of Poznan.

The cities of Dryzen (Dresdenko), Olau (Olava) (1 UV) were liberated.

30. The cities of Meseritz (Miedzyrzec), Züllihow (Sulechow) (1 BF) were liberated.

31. The cities of Landeberg (Gorzow-Velikopolsky), Schwibus (Swiebodzin) (1st BF) were liberated.

February 3. Troops of the 1st Belorussian Front started crossing the Oder (Odra).

14. The city of Schneidemuhl (Pila) was liberated (1st BF).

23. The city of Poznan was liberated (1st BF).

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By the beginning of 1945, despite all the defeats on the Eastern Front, neither the leadership of the Sh Reich nor the command of the Wehrmacht considered the war lost - the German army and SS troops were ready to fight for the Fatherland drops of blood) and, having shortened the front and consolidated on convenient defensive lines, everyone seriously hoped to transfer the war to a positional phase - following the example of the First World War. However, the Red Army frustrated all these plans. On January 12, 1945, Soviet troops launched a decisive offensive, crushed the enemy defenses, defeated Army Group A, and in just three weeks advanced five hundred kilometers to the West, surpassing the Wehrmacht of the 1941 model in terms of the offensive. This

was "Blitzkrieg on the contrary", retribution for the catastrophe of the initial period of the war - with the difference that, unlike the Wehrmacht, the Red Army struck at full

to the combat-ready and awaiting attack of the enemy. The Vistula-Oder operation is rightfully considered a model of offensive operations. This book pays homage to one of the greatest, most brilliant "clean" victories not only in national but also in world history.